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Ernest Best

Paul finished his last paragraph on a high note: God had shone in his heart and had given him an important ministry. But his life would not have looked important to an independent observer. To all appearances he was no more than an earthenware vessel, a cheap clay pot. Precious objects and treasures were however regularly kept in such pots. What treasure then is contained in the clay pot that is Paul? The answer is certainly not an immortal soul or divine spark kept in a perishable and mortal body. The clue comes from the preceding paragraph (this treasure). It may be either Paul's ministry or the light which shone in his heart when he became a Christian or the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. In fact these three cannot be clearly marked off from one another. The light which shone in Paul's heart on the Damascus road made him a Christian, gave him his ministry and brought him to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. What he says here of himself is true of every Christian and is seen most clearly when daily life is given up to the ministry of others--and all daily life should be a ministry to others.

For Paul a correlative of the recognition of human weakness is always the opportunity it gives to God. So the success of his ministry and the vitality of his Christian existence (neither should be measured in human terms) do not spring from his own ability and dedication but from the transcendent power of God. Paul draws out what this means with four vivid contrasts (vv.8,9). By

*This is an excerpt from the author's forthcoming commentary on 2 Corinthians in the series Interpretation and is printed here by kind permission of the general editors of the series. This series (John Knox Press, Atlanta, Georgia) 'is designed to meet the need of students, teachers, ministers, and priests for a contemporary expository commentary.' Several volumes have already appeared.

(all Scriptural references are to 2 Corinthians unless otherwise designated.)

all human reckoning he ought to be crushed, driven to despair, feel himself forsaken and destroyed because of what he has been through. It is useless to speculate what past incidents in his life Paul has in mind. He lists some of his trials in 11.23-28 but here he does not seem to be thinking primarily of physical suffering. Far worse is the anguish of mind that comes when we see those we love get into trouble, and Paul has seen this happen to the Corinthians. Despite his care they are failing to follow through in their Christian living. We might use other terms to describe the anxieties that come to us, not from the general human situation, but because we try to live as Christians. We do good and our goodness is ascribed to an attempt to curry popularity. We are profoundly perplexed when we try to apply Christianity to the terrifying problems of modern society: is unemployment worse than inflation? Does the possession of nuclear weapons endanger or preserve society? We are frustrated in our attempts to carry out some reform in an organisation or community of which we are members.

The pressures on Paul to which he refers did not get him down. God's transcendent power enabled him to endure. Some people stubbornly refuse to give in to adversity; with stiff upper lip they endure whatever fate throws at them. We admire them. But that was not how Paul endured, for the source of his strength lay not within himself but in the grace of God. God's power was made perfect in his weakness (12.9). That power is also always there with us to balance every outside circumstance and every interior thought that would bring us down. The promise is not that our troubles will pass away with time or that they only appear to be troubles or that a way out of them will eventually be found. The troubles are real and may never disappear, yet the power of God is there to bring us through them.

Paul generalises the four contrasts of vv.8-9 into three more in vv. 10-12. Of these the first two are parallel but the third breaks new ground. The affliction, perplexity, etc., of vv. 8-9 are rephrased as 'carrying in the body the death of Jesus' and 'being given up to death for Jesus' sake'. Paul's thought progresses naturally here for the treasure of Jesus was also in a cheap earthenware vessel --his human existence. There he had

been afflicted in every way, perplexed, persecuted, struck down. At first sight we might hesitate to apply 'perplexed' to Jesus. Did he not always know what to do? But was he not perplexed when he thought of the hungry and poor? Should he turn stones into bread? This and other temptations assailed him for many days. In all the ways that Jesus was afflicted we see his dying (= 'death'; Paul uses here a word that describes a process rather than the single event of the crucifixion). Jesus' dying went on all through his life.

Paul relates himself here to the death of Jesus. He does this in several ways in his letters. Christ has died for or instead of him, he has been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2.20), baptized into his death (Rom. 6.3), united with him in a death like his (Rom. 6.5). Such statements help us to understand Paul when he talks of 'always carrying in the body the death (dying) of Jesus'. Because Paul once died with Christ he dies daily with him (I Cor. 15.31). It is not that he is continually in danger of death because of his missionary work or that he rejects the claims of his body through the practice of asceticism. It is rather that he never escapes affliction, perplexity, and the like. So also Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and take up our crosses (Mark 8.34). This is not something confined to the moment we become Christians but is part of the essential nature of living as Christians. It was the way Jesus lived, a continual denial of the self as important and worthy of consideration. This is a kind of dying which goes on all through life.

Paul of course does not deliberately seek suffering. It comes as he lives as a Christian and results in the life of Jesus being seen in him. There is a natural connection in the thought here for Jesus' dying was followed by his rising again. When then Paul though afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down is not crushed or destroyed (vv. 8-9) it is because the life of Jesus is in his life. Because Christ has risen, Paul can 'walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6.4). He no longer lives but Christ lives in him (Gal. 2.20). As there is a process of dying so there is a process in which the risen power of Christ manifests itself in Paul's life. As a result of this he is changed into the likeness of Christ

(3.18). As long as he lives he is dying for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus may be seen in him (v.11). And this is true for all of us: there is no escape 'while we live' from the process of dying which is the denying of self until we physically die. That kind of dying is inherent in all Christian existence.

Equally inherent in all Christian existence is the presence of the life of Jesus within, but it is a life which is never to be shut up within but always to be manifested to the world. Paul does not die in his ministry to satisfy some inner urge for unity with a dying Savior but that the life of that Savior should be seen by others. The manifestation of the risen life of Jesus, seen in loving service, wins men to learn of the Christ who died for them. Paul certainly preaches Christ crucified (I Cor. 1.23) but one of the essential ways in which he does so is by showing Christ's life in his life. He cannot show this unless he accepts Christ crucified for himself, and this of course he has done. Both the death of Jesus and his life are simultaneously visible in the life (body) of Paul.

We expect Paul now to go on and say 'You should be finding the same in yourselves'. Instead he introduces a new and surprising contrast: 'death is at work in us, but life in you' (v.12). It is however not so surprising once we have understood the purpose of Paul's dying. It is not for his own gain but for the sake of others'. Here we come close to what he wrote in 1.6 (see also 11.7). It is taken even further in Col. 1.24 (this may not be by Paul) where his sufferings are said to make up for what is lacking in those of Christ and to be for the sake of the church. In a sense Paul's death is a representative death just as was Christ's. But Paul's death is not independent of Christ's as Christ's was of all other deaths. Dependent on Christ's death Paul's dying wins converts to Christ and, more importantly in this context, it should bring life to the Corinthians. Christ's risen life which Paul sees in himself ought to be appearing in them. Paul's dying is not for himself but for them. Is it not logical that, if Christ's dying can mean so much for us, Paul's dying and our dying should not also mean something for others and bring life to light in them? (See 1.3-7 for the way in which suffering and comfort are

transferred between Christians.)

Paul has been saying this in the context of his ministry to the Corinthians yet what he writes applies to all Christians. In troubles and anxieties we Christians find that God lifts us up over them if not out of them, that in our dying with Christ his risen life shows itself in us and that as a result that same life appears in those, or at least in some of those, with whom our lives are involved. In turn we are helped by those others just as Paul found himself helped and refreshed in a deep and spiritual sense by his converts (I Cor. 16.18; Philm 20; cf I Thess. 3.8). This is a mutual process in which every Christian should be bringing help to others and be receiving it from them.

It is not perhaps possible to explain in simple rational terms this interchange of spiritual benefit between members of the church. It is linked to the conception of the church as Christ's Body in which the members rejoice and suffer together. If not easily rationalised it has been a fact of the experience of the church throughout the ages. It means incidentally that members of a congregation have as much to give those who minister to them as to receive from them. More generally it means that every Christian by faithfully enduring affliction builds up other Christians in life and joy.

At least a part of Paul's contribution to the Body of Christ has been his preaching. It indeed landed him in all the trials he described in vv.8-11. But it was also for the sake of the Corinthians (v.15), that life might be at work in them. Moreover if he preached he did so out of faith, he preached what he believed. He draws in here a verse from the Psalms (116.10) probably hoping thereby to disarm those who criticised him because he did not use the Old Testament enough (cf chapter 3). The RSV translation of this verse of the Psalm is based on the Hebrew text and it differs from what we have here. Paul quotes the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint). He usually quotes from this version for it would be the one his Greek speaking readers would have had available.

Paul however goes a little further than merely quoting the Old Testament. By saying that we have the same spirit of faith he joins the believers of the Old

Covenant to himself. Both he and they believe because God's Spirit has been at work in them and produced a believing spirit or disposition. Belief leads to speech. If we genuinely believe something to be important we will talk about it. Paul believed the gospel to be all-important and he went around preaching it. If he had not done so he would never have been persecuted or perplexed and the Corinthians would never have been given their hope that they would be raised with the Lord Jesus and brought with Paul eventually into Jesus' presence. This is not just a vague hope for the future. Already Paul has found the life of Jesus within himself (vv.10-11) so he knows and the Corinthians should know the certainty of their future presence with Jesus.

In what follows (4.16 - 5.10) Paul is about to go on to say more about what the life with Jesus will be but before he does so he cannot restrain himself from running on beyond his immediate objective to his ultimate: everything that happens is for the glory of God. The Greek here is difficult and we may either take it as in the RSV of the extension of the church in numbers or as in some other translations (e.g. AV) of the growth of the majority in the depth of their faith. Whether more join the church or each member grows in grace all will increase their thanksgiving to God from whom everything derives, and this will be to his glory.

INTRODUCTION

In a previous study,¹ I traced the reflections in the Epistle of James of what rabbinic traditions were to call yēser hara or the "Evil Inclination." The present study advances the hypothesis that Paul also makes use of the yēser concept. This concept has its roots in Gen 6:5; 8:21 and describes the disposition by which human beings are "impelled... to consciously unlawful acts."² By Paul's time, yēser had become a technical term, and that Paul knew of it is most clearly demonstrated by Gal 5:16.³ In what follows I will describe the way in which Paul, in his undisputed letters, both employs Jewish traditions concerning the yēser and, in some cases, stands them on their head.⁴

1 THESSALONIANS

Writing to a church composed of former Gentiles who are undergoing persecution from their Gentile compatriots,⁵ Paul reminds them in 1 Thess 4:5 of the will of God. This is that they keep away from porneia, "unchastity," each one keeping his own "vessel" (= wife? body?) in holiness and honour, "not in the passion of desire (en pathēi epithymia) like the Gentiles who do not know God." Although epithymia⁶ is not always a translation for yēser in Paul, it is so in the present case. The linkage of the yēser with illicit sexual activity, a linkage which Paul utilizes here, goes all the way back to Genesis 6,⁸ and forms a trajectory which continues in the Qumran literature and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,⁹ as well as in rabbinic traditions.¹⁰

Paul asserts that it is characteristic of Gentiles that they act "in the passion of desire" (cf. Eph. 4:17-18). Here he is following the lead of Jewish traditions such as IQS 5:5, which speaks of "circumcising the foreskin of the yēser" in order to lay a foundation of truth for Israel. This phrase seems to imply that the yēser in its natural state is uncircumcised, a suspicion borne out by Sukkah 52a, where one of its names is "uncircumcised."¹¹

GALATIANS

The association of the yēser with Gentiles leads naturally into a consideration of Galatians. If the Gentile world is characterized by abandonment to the yēser, a logical

inference might be that the person who desires to follow God rather than the Evil Inclination must separate himself from Gentiles. That inference was apparently drawn by Paul's Galatian opponents, a group of Jewish-Christian missionaries whom J. Louis Martyn designates "the Teachers."¹² A stance similar to that of the Teachers is reflected in CD 19:20-23:

Each man did what was good in his eyes, and each one chose the stubbornness of his heart, and they kept not themselves from the people and its sin but lived in license deliberately, walking in the ways of the wicked; of whom God said, "Their wine is the poison of serpents and the head of asps is cruel" (Deut 32.33) The serpents are the kings of the peoples and their wine is their ways.¹³

At Qumran, the "stubbornness of his heart" (sryrwt lbw)¹⁴ is synonymous with "the thought of his yēser," as IQS 5:4-5 shows; hence it is the yeser which causes a person to associate with Gentiles.

The Teachers' yēser doctrine is probably behind Paul's polemic in Gal 5:16: "Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the desire of the flesh (epithymian sarkos)."
Epithymia sarkos is a translation of the Hebrew term found in 10H 10:23, ysr bsr.¹⁶ Like Paul, the Jewish-Christian Teachers may have asserted that, "walking in the Spirit" was potent against the yēser.¹⁷ They, however, would have connected "walking in the Spirit" and the consequent¹⁸ defeat of the yēser with conversion to the law of Moses. The Torah, for them would be the antidote to the yēser, as already¹⁹ in Sirach 21:11 and commonly in rabbinic traditions. Paul, however, discerns an antinomy between being "led by the spirit" and being "under the Law" (Gal 5:18); for him the Spirit alone²⁰ sundered from the Torah, is the antidote to the yēser.

In Gal 5:17, Paul goes on to describe the battle between the yēser and the Spirit,²¹ and in 5:19-21 he lists some of the evil works to which the yēser impels human beings.²² Then, in 5:24, he unveils his solution to the "yēser

problem"; those who are "of Christ" have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²³ This verse alludes to the destruction of the yēser, an event contemplated²⁴ in rabbinic traditions such as that of Sukka 52b²⁴ and probably already in 1QH 6:32.²⁵ In contrast to his Jewish background, however, Paul believes that the destruction of the yēser is accomplished, not by study and observance of the²⁶ Law, but by participation in the crucified Messiah.

Gal 5:16ff. is the most explicit yēser passage in the letter, but the yēser lurks in the background in other passages, such as 4:21-31, which is probably based on a midrash by the Teachers concerning Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael.²⁷ For the Teachers, the statement in 4:23,29 that Ishmael was born kata sarka, "according to the flesh," would have implied that he, the ancestor of the Gentiles, was conceived at the instigation of the yēser.²⁸ Having his origin in the yēser, Ishmael, and his descendants after him, would live out their lives in slavery to the yēser.²⁹ On the other hand, Isaac, the ancestor of the Jews, was born, not according to the yēser, but according to the Spirit; and his descendants live out their lives in that glorious freedom from the Evil Inclination which is one of the greatest gifts of God's Law.

Paul, as might be expected, turns the Teachers midrash on its head. For him the Sinai covenant leads, not to freedom from the yēser, but to enslavement to it; Paul establishes this point by demonstrating³⁰ that Mount Sinai is in Hagar-Ishmael territory.

Paul is probably also arguing against the Teachers in Gal 3:3, where the subject is perfection. CD 2:15-16 suggests that, at Qumran, "walking in perfection" and "not being drawn by the yēser" are synonymous expressions.³¹ Thus Gal 3:3 is a warning to the Galatians that, although they had made a good start in their assault on the yēser, by means of the only weapon which is effective against it, the Spirit, they are now in danger of relying on the very realm from which it arises, the flesh, in their attempt to finish it off. The Teachers would have agreed that relying on the flesh in order to defeat the

yēser is a no-win strategy; but they would never have concurred with Paul in placing "works of the Law" in the realm of the flesh (3:2-3).

Finally, a concern with the yēser can be seen in Gal 5:13, which might be paraphrased, "Don't let the inclination of the flesh use your freedom to create to itself," and in 6:7-8, which associates the flesh with perishability. The latter is a characteristic of the yēser,³² and 6:7-8a might therefore be rendered, "Do not be deceived by the yēser; for the person who follows its pull will reap the destruction which is its mark."

1 and 2 Corinthians

Yēser speculation provides the background for many of Paul's statements in the Corinthian correspondence. The first canonical letter in that correspondence, it should be recalled, is addressed to a church, some of whose members see themselves as already "risen in Christ," made participants in heavenly gnosis, and thus released from earthly constraints.³³ To counter this gnostic libertinism, Paul draws on Jewish paraenetic traditions which at times mention the yēser.

One example of a reference to the yēser is 1 Cor 7:37, where the person whose passions do not overwhelm him is referred to as one who has control over tou idiou thelēματος, "his own will." At Qumran, one's own will is synonymous with "one's yēser,"³⁴ and raṣon, the Hebrew word used there for "will," is often translated as thelema in the LXX.³⁵ Furthermore, there is probably a reference to the yēser in John 1:13,³⁶ ek thelēματος sarkos "from the will of the flesh."³⁶ The combined force of these arguments is to suggest that the person of 1 Cor 7:37 is one who has his yēser³⁷ (especially as it affects his sexuality) under control.

By its opposition to God's will, the yēser makes itself into a stronghold of opposition to the knowledge of God. Two passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls connect "stronghold" imagery with the yēser. In 1QH7:16-17, the hymnist thanks God that, although "you know the (evil) inclination of your servant," yet "there do not belong to me the strongholds of flesh (mḥsy bsr)," and in 1QH 10:23 he thanks God that "you have not made the inclination of flesh (ysr bsr) to be my stronghold (mḥsy

bsr)," and in 1QH 10:23 he thanks God that "you have not made the inclination of flesh(ysr bsr)to be my stronghold (m wz)."³⁸ "Stronghold" imagery, in conjunction with "flesh" words, recurs in 2 Cor 10:2-5. In this passage Paul is probably countering the arguments of the Corinthian "super-apostles." These "super-apostles," according to D. Georgi, were charismatic Jewish-Christian missionaries who claimed to unlock the mysteries of the scriptures by means of allegorical interpretation, and who turned the Corinthians against Paul by pointing to his inability to compete with them in exegesis.³⁹ Paul retorts that the "super-apostles'" arguments are actually strongholds of rebellion against God.

These "strongholds" (ochyrōmatōn, v 4), which Paul destroys by using God's non-fleshly weapons, are identified as logismous, "reasonings," and "every high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God." Here it should be recalled that, from the beginning, the yeser is connected with the life of the mind.⁴⁰ 2 Cor 10:2-5 thus implies that a person tries to shape for himself a secure world by means of his thought (that is, by the yēser), but only ends up battling against God by that which he shapes. God's counter attack, however, sweeps away the resistant inclination, and takes captive (aichmalōtizontes) every thought into the obedience of Christ. It should be noted that the same verb, aichmalōtizein,⁴¹ is used in Rom 7:23 to describe the yeser's action. A person is thus confronted with one of two captivities: captivity to the yēser or captivity to Christ.

Other possible references to the yēser in the Corinthian correspondence can be dealt with more briefly. The "old leaven," the "leaven of evil and wickedness," in which the Corinthians should not feast (1 Cor 5:8), may well be the yeser, which in rabbinic traditions is termed "leaven."⁴² The disobedience of the wilderness generation, to which Paul alludes in 1 Cor 10:5-13, is related in Jewish literature to the yēser.⁴³ Furthermore, the words epithymētas and epethymēsan in 1 Cor 10:16 are part of a word-group which we have demonstrated to be associated with the yēser; and the first two sins enumerated in vv 7-10, idolatry and unchastity, are

those most commonly linked with the Evil Inclination.⁴⁴ Finally, the "spirit of the world" in 1 Cor 2:12 may be a paraphrase for the yēser.⁴⁵

ROMANS

Writing to a church situated at the heart of the Empire and made up of both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, Paul angles for support for his future missionary plans and musters arguments he expects to use on his anticipated trip to the mother church in Jerusalem.⁴⁶ The latter church, as well as the Jewish component in the Roman church, must have been particularly in his mind as he penned Romans 1:18ff., which utilizes Jewish polemic against the depravity of the pagan world.

This great apocalypse of God's wrath seems to be loosely based on Wis. 13-15; especially important is Wis 14:12, "For the idea of making idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them was the corruption of life." Paul, however, introduces as a linkage point between idolatry and fornication (and other forms of sin) the "desires of their hearts" (1:24), "dishonorable passions" (1:26), "a worthless mind" (1:28) - in a word, the yēser. The dynamic of vv 21-30 may be summed up: human beings choose their own inclination rather than God's will; then God gives them up to that which they have chosen. This same story is told three times (vv21-24, 25-27, 28-30).

The first narrative, vv 21-24, reveals a complex interrelation between human autonomy, epistemology, and sexuality. The human refusal to honor God leads to a clouding of the perception ("their hearts were darkened") and to idolatry, both of which have strong links with Jewish yēser traditions. As noted earlier,⁴⁷ the yēser is associated with thought from Gen 6:5 on, and "the heart" can be a synonym for it.⁴⁸ Furthermore, many⁴⁹ Jewish traditions associate the yēser with idolatry. One such passage of particular importance is 1QH 4:13-15:

The source of the hypocrites' schemes can be identified as Belial; but it can also be traced to their double-heartedness (= being ruled by both the Good and Evil Inclinations),⁵⁰ to the "root of bitter fruits" (= the yēser),⁵¹ to their "stubbornness of heart" (= the yēser again),⁵¹ and to their idolatry, the fact that they set before their faces that which causes sin (= the idol of the yēser).⁵²

Since the yēser is an idol, however, the concrete acts of idolatry to which Paul refers in Rom 1:21-24 are derivative of the primary idolatry of putting the yēser at the centre of one's being. As a result of a person's choosing this idol, illusion invades his life⁵³ and thence impels him into concrete actions of self-destruction, particularly of a sexual nature. The fantasy of the yēser does not remain merely a fantasy but becomes an enslaving actuality.⁵⁴ God gives people up en tais epithymiais tōn kardiōn autōn, "in the desires of their hearts" (v 24); here we encounter epithymia again.⁵⁵

Basically the same story is repeated in Rom 1:25-27 and 1:28-30. People refuse to worship God, or to have knowledge of him (vv 25, 28a); therefore God gives them up eis pathē atimias, "to dishonorable passions" (v 26) or eis adokimon noun, "to a worthless mind" (v 28), i.e. to the yēser.⁵⁶ The actions which result include not only sexual sins but the whole gamut of human evil (vv 29-31); the yēser twists creation out of shape, turning that which is natural (physikēn) into that which is contrary to nature (para physin, v 26).⁵⁷

So far, as J. Louis Martyn notes,⁵⁸ Paul has been preaching a sermon which could be expected to warm the hearts of some of the Jewish Christians in Rome (= the "weak" of chaps. 14-15?). They have heard a scathing denunciation of the typical sins to which the yēser impels the Gentile world. Rom 2:1 continues, "Therefore you are without excuse, O man, whoever...." The expected conclusion to the sentence would be, "whoever does such things." Paul, however, turns the tables and instead denounces "whoever judges." the judge of 2:1ff. can be identified with the Jewish Christian in 2:17 who relies upon the Law, then Paul's message is clear: the Jewish Christian who judges his Gentile brother on the basis of the Torah is as much under the domination of the Evil Inclination as the person whom he

condemns. For the judge's sklērotēs, "hardness," and ametanoētos kardia, "impenitent heart" (2:5), which are shown in his overlooking of God's kindness, are nothing other than the yēser, by which⁵⁹ he is storing up wrath for himself on Judgement Day.

The relationship between the yēser and the judge's standard of judgement, the Torah, is the subject of that most convoluted and controversial chapter, Rom 7. Here, as previously in Galatians, Paul decisively parts company with the Jewish and Jewish Christian view of the Torah as the antidote to the yēser. Rather, as 7:5 testifies, "the passions of sins (= the yēser), which are through the Law, worked in our members to produce death." Instead of leading to life by defeating the yēser, the Law leads to death by giving rise to and stirring up yēser.⁶⁰

How this happens is revealed in Rom 7:7-25. The ultimate enemy of mankind is neither the Law nor even the yēser, but hamartia, "sin," which is personified and viewed as a cosmic power.⁶¹ Sin by itself, however, has no base of operations (aphormē) from which to launch an attack against human beings; that base, according to Paul is provided by he entolē, "the commandment" (7:8). The commandment of the⁶² Law, which by intention is directed against the yēser,⁶³ instead finds itself exploited by sin to produce and aggravate the yēser. Thus sin finds entry into the human being in the form of the commandment-generated inclination; the yēser is hē oikousa en emoi hamartia, "the sin which dwells in me" (7:17,20), which causes a person to do that which he hates (7:19-20).⁶⁴ It is also "the law of sin which dwells in my members" and which opposes the Law of God (7:22-23).

By referring to the yēser as a nomos tēs hamartias, a "law of sin," and by opposing this "law of sin" to the "law of God" and the "law of my mind," Paul is again reacting to the Jewish notion of the Torah as the antidote to the yēser. Yes, Paul admits, the Torah is "holy, just and good" in God's intention (7:12), and thus it is God's Law; furthermore, its goodness can still be grasped by the mind. When the Torah encounters the flesh, however, it is "weakened" (cf. 8:3) and becomes sin's Law (7:23), and far from overcoming the yēser, it unwittingly participates in the yēser's creation. This

analysis continues in Rom 8. Since the Torah, weakened by the flesh, is unable to cope with the yēser problem, God must send his Son in the likeness of the Evil Inclination, so that in the Son's death the yēser may be destroyed (8:3). Yet Paul does not entirely distance himself from the Jewish understanding of the Torah as the antidote to the yēser, for in 8:2 he speaks of "the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus" which sets one free from "the law of sin and death" (= the yēser). Choosing his words very carefully, he can thus retain the idea of the Law as potent against the yēser, because he believes that with the coming of Christ an antinomy has arisen in the Torah itself.⁶⁵

The yēser puts in several other appearances in Romans. In Rom 6:12, the end result (and purpose?) of sin's dwelling in human bodies is that people obey tais epithymiais, "the desires," of the body; that is, that they obey the yēser. The yēser is explicitly mentioned in 8:5-7, where Paul speaks of to phronēma tēs sarkos, "the mind of the flesh," which is hostile to God and does not submit to his Law, indeed cannot.⁶⁶ It may also be in view in 8:12-13, where the Roman Christians are exhorted to put to death the deeds of the body (= the deeds to which the yēser impels them?) by the Spirit.

Finally, Rom 13:14 should be considered: "But put on (endysasthe) the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (kai tēs sarkos pronoian mē poieisthe eis epithymias). The tēs sarkos pronoia . . . eis epithymias is equivalent to the yēser, whose association with sarx, epithymia, and thought has often been noted in this study; the answer to its prodding is "putting on Christ". Hermas, Mandate 12.2.4, which probably reflects Jewish paraenetic traditions, contains a similar exhortation with a striking difference: in order to resist evil desires, endysai tēn epithymian tēs dikaiosynēs, "put on the righteous desire," that is, the Good Inclination.

Paul, however, never mentions a good yēser, even though that concept apparently existed in his time; and Man.12:2:4 suggests that in Rom 13:14 he may have deliberately altered a Jewish tradition, which spoke of putting on the good yēser in order to defeat the evil yēser.⁶⁷ In Paul's view, however, the solution to the

problem of evil cannot be an intrinsic, internalized "Good Inclination," but only something which comes to the human being from outside - namely, the Spirit.

CONCLUSION - THE EVIL INCLINATION AND THE GOD OF THIS

For Paul, the solution to the problem WORLD. of evil cannot be a Good Inclination, because evil itself is not to such an extent internalized that the concept of the yēser can grasp it in its profundity. For this reason, Paul speaks not only about the yēser but also about Satan.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the yēser about which Paul writes is the yēser bāsār, the "inclination of the flesh," as Gal 5:16 establishes; and a glance at a concordance confirms that Paul speaks explicitly of the "flesh" much more frequently than he does of the yēser.⁶⁹ This frequency of "flesh" language is evidence for the pervasiveness of the apocalyptic framework in Paul's thinking, since "flesh" means the sphere over which the power of Satan holds sway.⁷⁰ For Paul, "flesh" is a more fundamental category than yēser is. It is a personified entity⁷¹ with a mind of its own (Rom 8:6); its thought is the yēser (see Rom 13:14), and a person who lives under its domination is a person possessed. In Paul's thinking, the concept of yēser has undergone an apocalyptic transformation. Somewhere along the line, he has made a discovery similar to that of the Qumran hymnist:

My heart was terrified because of the evil thought, for it is Belial (that is seen) when the inclination of their being is revealed.

When the reality of the apocalyptic warfare becomes plain, it is revealed that Satan stands behind and exploits the Evil Inclination.

How has Paul reached the conclusion that the problem is bigger than the yēser, that the true adversary is a personified, cosmic power of evil? Would Paul as a Pharisee have already held this belief? While we do not wish to deny that Paul, before his conversion to faith in Jesus, knew of Satan's existence, it seems probably that, as a Pharisee, he would have felt humanity's main struggle to be against the Evil Inclination. The extent of Satan's responsibility for evil is a secret which became manifest to Paul only with the revelation of the

meaning of the Cross and the Christian community.⁷³ The Gospel reveals who the enemy is, along with God's triumph over him; which is another way of saying that, for Paul, Jesus' death and resurrection are the apocalyptic event.

Notes

1. The Evil Inclination in the Epistle of James, CBQ 44, 1982
2. G.F. Moore, Judaism (1927; rpt. New York, 1971), I, 480
3. See below, p.2.... On yēser as a fixed concept by the first century AD see F.C. Porter ("The Yeser Hara", Biblical and Semitic Studies, NYork 1901, p109) who emphasizes that already in the CT the word had "gained a certain independence as meaning the nature or disposition of man". This process had been completed by the time the Damascus Document was written, as can be seen from the way in which CD 2.16 reverses the phrase of Gen. 6.5 and 1 Chron 28.9 i.e. "the inclination of the thoughts" to read "the thoughts of the Inclination".
4. The undisputed letters are Romans, 1,2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thess. and Philemon. The letters containing the term yēser will be given in the chronological order suggested by R. Jewett, Dating Paul's Life, London 1979 pp 162-165. Paul translates the Hebrew term yeser like the LXX and The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Cf Porter op.cit. and R.H. Charles, The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, London 1908, p162)
5. Or. the sitz im leben of 1 Thess, see G. Bornkamm, Paul, NYork 1965, pp62-65
6. Contrast the "good" usage in 1 Thess 2.17; Phil 1.23
7. On epithumia as a translation for yēser, see my comments on James 1.14, op.cit. Further support for this identification comes from the second century Shepherd of Hermas which incorporates much Jewish paraenetic material and which in Mandate 12(1.1,2,3; 2.4;3.1 passim) speaks of a good and evil epithumia, as in rabbinic writings. See L.W. Barnard, Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and their Background, Oxford 1966, 160-161 and O. Seitz, "Two Spirits in Man", NIS 1959/60, 90-92
8. The first mention of yēser in Gen 6.5 follows immediately on the report of the illicit intercourse between the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men"
9. CD 2.16 places in syncretism parallelism: "the inclination (ysr) of guilt" and "eyes of fornication". In the Testament of Judah, Judah describes how, blinded by the diabolion of youth (=impulse), he had intercourse with Tamar [diabolion is the closest rendering for yēser in the Testaments (cf Charles op.cit 1962)] The link between yēser and illicit sexuality is more pronounced in intertestamental and later literature than it is in the Hebrew Bible; this increased emphasis may be due to Hellenistic influence.
10. See Porter, op.cit, 111
11. The IQS text is cited by Jewett(R) in Paul's Anthropological Terms, Leiden 1971,84; the Sukka text by S. Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, NYork 1909 (rpt 1961) 243-244. Hebrew quotations are from E. Lohse, Die Texte aus Qumran, Munich 1964. NB the association of yēser with idolatry, the sin par excellence of the Gentile world.
12. In his forthcoming Anchor Bible Commentary on Galatians. Throughout this study, I am heavily indebted to Martyn's insights.
13. English translations of Qumran documents are from A. Dupont-Sommer, The Essene Writings from Qumran, Gloucester, Mass 1973. That the reference in CD 19.20-23 is to association with Gentiles is established by (a) the plural "peoples" (mym) in 19.23, to which the singular m in 19.20 is apparently parallel and (b) the continuation of the passage which identifies "head of the asps" as the "chief of the kings of Yawan"(Greece) (19.23-24)
14. On this expression, see the illuminating note by A.B. Spencer, "Strywt as Self-Reliance", JBL 100, 1981, 247-248
15. Martyn (op.cit) demonstrates, I believe, how much of Galatians is polemical against the Teacher's doctrines, but of already J.C. Beker, Paul the Apostle, Philadelphia 1980, 42-44
16. D. Flusser, "The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity" in Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, (ed. C.Rabin & Y. Yadin) Jerusalem 1958, 255
17. IQH 4:30-33 and IQS 3.6-9 emphasize that "perfection" comes only from the Spirit; but as

CD 2.15-16 establishes, "perfection" is equivalent to "not being drawn by the yēser." Furthermore, 1QH 4.31 may be a pur. cr. the yēser concept; man has no perfection of way "unless it be by the Spirit which God has created (ysr)" for him.

Cf. CD.16.4-6 - on the day on which a person is converted to the law of Moses, the Angel of Hostility departs from him. The passage goes on to say that this is why Abraham circumcised himself. It is probable that the Teacher, like the Dead Sea Covenanters, regarded Abraham as the spiritual forefather of all those who overcome the yēser, as Martyn (op.cit) maintains, citing, among other texts, those just given from the Damascus Document.

Porter, op.cit. 140f; 127-129

Cf. 1 Thess 4.8 where, after the reference to yēser in 4.5, God is pointedly designated as the giver of the Spirit.

Here the yēser is described in verbal rather than in nominal terms ie instead of speaking of epithumia sarkos, "the desire of the flesh", Paul says, he sarx epithumēi, "the flesh desires". In 1 Peter 2.11 and Polycarp Phil 5.3, passages reminiscent of Gal 5.17, the Spirit's antagonists are sarkikoi epithumiai "fleshly desires" and pasa epithumia, "every desire" respectively (cf. Ger. 6.5) For Paul, then, sarx can stand for epithumia sarkos etc. See ref. to Barnabas 10.9 (N.28) and comments on "flesh" below.

The "works of the flesh" are the sort of sins commonly attributed to yēser

The plurality of "passions and desires" (pathēmata kai epithumiai) probably refers to yēser in the singular. (Cf "every inclination of the thoughts" of man's heart: Gen 6.5 implying a plurality of evil yesarim; also the singular of Ger. 8.21)

Anonymous tradition from the school of R. Ishmael (cf Porter op.cit 128)

"There shall be no deliverance for the inclination of guilt; he (God) will trample it unto destruction and there shall be no remnant." (Duport-Sommer, rv)

In Gal 6.14 is the world which has been crucified rather than the desires, but the two are probably connected in Paul's mind; cf Titus 2.12; 2 Clem 17.2 speaks of kosmikai epithumiai "worldly desires". (cf Jas 3.6 for another possible link)

See C.K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians", Käsemann Festschrift, Rechtfertigung (ed J. Friedrich et alii) Tübingen: 1976, 1-16

On Hagar's descendants as Gentiles see Jubilees 16.17-18 cited by Barrett (op.cit), 9.

kata sarka is probably Paul's shorthand for kata epithumia tes sarkos, "according to the desire of the flesh" (cf Barn 10.9) On being born "according to the flesh" see Johr 3.6; 9.34; and, more importantly, John 1.13, oude ek thelēzatos sarkos... egenēthēsan ie from the yēser (or thelēma as trans for yēser see below) In addition the Jewish-Christian Kerygmata Petrou (c AD 200) mentions ten ek epithumias protēr sou . . . geresin, "Your first birth which came from desire" (Hom XI, 26.1) With thelēma and epithumia both authors probably reach back to Jewish yēser traditions. Such a tradition may be embodied in the fragments of 1QH 9.15-16: "Can human born of human (m nws) be righteous, and can man [born of men] have understanding? And can flesh born of the inclination [of flesh] be glorious?" (my trans.)

On the yēser as enslaver, see Tit 3.3, doyleucntes epithumiais kai hēdcais poikilais, "serving various desires and pleasures" and 2 Pet 2.18-19 (or which see below N.32)

The theme continues in Rab. literature [cf R. Akiba (fl. 110-135) and R. Abin (fourth cent) in Ger. rab. 22.6]

See geog. notice in Gal 4.25, and wide spread notion of Arabs as descendants of Ishmael: Jub 20.13

See also 1QS 8.1-3

The yēser is specifically linked with corruption in rab. traditions; its destiny is "to become worms and maggots" (Ned. 9b) and others refs attributed to Simon the Just cited in Schechter (op.cit 249) Cf also 2 Pet 1.4; 2.18-19)

See D. Georgi, First Corinthians, IBS, 182f

In CD 2.21; 3.2-3, 11-12 "their own will" (rswn) or "the will of his own spirit" (rswn rwhw) clearly designate the human will as divorced from and opposed to God, ie the yēser. CD 3. 11-12 parallels this "own will" to "the stubbornness of their heart", (cf above as synonym of yēser)

See Esther 1.8; Ps 29(30); 6, 8 ; 39(40).9; 102(103).21; 142(143).10; 144(145).19; Dan 11.16, 36

See above N.28

37. The Stoic ideal of autarkeia is recalled in 1 Cor 7.37 and had already merged with the yēser concept in Paul's time (See my "Evil Inclination in James" on Philo); cf also the latter on yēser as "fire" and 1Cor 7.9. Later rabb. tradition also presents yēser as fire (cf C.G. Montefiore & H. Loewe, A Rabbinic Anthology, NYork 1974(rpt) p98)
38. Cf Gal 5.13 and Paul's use of aphormē, originally denoting a base of operations for a military expedition, for "opportunity".
39. D. Georgi, op.cit.p184f; also his Die Gegner des Paulus im K Corinthbrief (Neukirchener 1964) 301-305
40. Cf again Gen 6.5; thus yēser is equivalent to the "strongholds" and "reascrings" (2 Cor 10.4 and "high things" (10.5); cf the trans of Gen. 8.21 "The imagery of man's heart is evil from his youth" (M. Buter, Good and Evil, NYork 1952, 90)
41. See below.
42. See tradition attributed to Abba Jose the Potter, a Tanna of the sixth generation, in Gen. rab. 34.10; cf also other traditions in Montefiore, Loewe, op.cit,300, Schechter op.cit.262 265f
43. CD 3.4-9 narrates that "the sons of Jacob strayed because of this" ie "inclination of guilt" (2.16); cf the destruction mentioned 1 Cor.10.5-13)
44. On unchastity, vide supra; on idolatry see below.
45. On yēser as spirit, see N.21; on link with "the world" see N.26
46. On the sitz im leben of Romans, see Bornkamm, Paul 88-96; P.S. Minear, The Obedience of Faith Naperville, 1971, 1-35; The Romans Debate, ed. K.P. Donfried, Minneapolis 1977.
47. See N.40
48. On the "darkened heart" of Rom 1.21 as yēser of 4 Ezra's expression "the evil heart" (cor malignum cited by Porter op.cit 146-149); also 1QS 5.45 where "his heart" is synonymous with the thought of his yēser.
49. See CD 20.9f where those who have "put idols on their heart" are identified with those who have gone "in the stubbornness of the heart". The latter, as noted, is synonymous with "in the yēser." Rabb traditions continue the association of the yēser with idolatry; see the remarks attributed to Johanan b. Nuri (120-140) and R. Yannai (200-220), respectively in b. Sabb. 105b and y. Ned 9.41b (cited by W.D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, NYork 1967 29-30) See also G. Strecker "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity" in W. Bauer, Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity, ET by Fortress Press 1971,262 where he says of the Jewish-Christian document Kerymata Petrou: "It alludes to the polytheistic cult of idols (Hom. 11.21.4, 11.31.1, etc) which is also characterized by "lust" (epithumia - Hom. 11.26.1; cf 11.11.5, 11.15.1 and 4ff., etc.)"
50. See my "Evil Inclination in James" n.37
51. On the "root of bitter fruits" of Heb.12.15. The phrase is paralleled with "stubbornness of heart" and may be equivalent to yēser; vide supra
52. The ensuing passage ie 1QH 4.17-19 is significant for the interpretation of Rom 1.21-23. Here the hypocrites are charged with having rejected the "vision of knowledge" (cf. Rom 1.22 also 1.25a, 28a); therefore God will judge them according to their idols, and they will be taken in their thoughts (cf. Rom.1.21 en tois dialogismois auton).
53. Cf CD 1.18 where "those who choose illusion" seem to be linked with those in CD 2 led astray by the yēser.
54. Cf Mt 5.28; Mk 7.21-23 and pars.
55. On the plurality of desires here see N.23
56. The phrase eis adokimon noun reminds us that one of the functions of the yēser is dokimazein "to test" a human being; see Porter (Op.cit. 142) on Sir.27.5-6. An adokimos nous is a mind which has been exposed to the testing action and failed.
57. Paul is using Stoic categories here to describe the yēser's effect. Rom 1.32 may be an echo of T.Ash 6.2 who declares that two-faced people (ie ruled by both inclinations) both do evil and approve those who do it. M. de Jonge unlike Charles (op cit.168), omits these words from his Greek text (Testamenta XII Patriarcharum, Leiden 1970) as not necessary.

Seminar on Romans, Union Theol. Seminary, NYork, Spring 1980.

See again IQS 5. which parallels "the thought of his yēser" with "the stubbornness of his heart" Paul uses the same word for "passions" (pathēmata) as Gal 5.24, identified earlier as a yēser passage. For a discussion on the meaning of dia tou nomou of commentaries by Sanday and Headlam (ICC, 1922, pp174f: it "refers to the effect of the law in calling forth and aggravating sin."), Barrett (NYork 1957: "engendered through the law") and A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans (ed B.M. Newman & E.A. Nida; Stuttgart 1973, 131); also on dia plus the genitive of BDF 223(2), BAG 179d.

Notice that in Rom 7.11 hamartia is used with the verb exapataō ("deceive"), recalling the story in Genesis 3 (see Barrett, op.cit. p144) and associated hamartia with the serpent in that story. The personification of sin in Paul is well-known, causing people to obey the yēser; Cf also Justin, First Apology 10 and John 8.44.

In Rom.7.7 Paul sums up the law's demand as ouk epithumēseis, "You shall not covet" and may here direct the demand against the yēser

In Rom.7.8 Paul uses the phrase "every lust" (pasan epithumian) recalling Gen 6.5; cf N.23 According to Romans 1, the yēser appears to exist in humanity from the beginning; in Rom.7 it appears only to come with the commandment.; similarly Rom 1 appears to make it a matter of man's choice while Rom 7 suggests it is something that happens to man. Cf also the contrast in emphasis between Gen 6.5 and 8.21. Paul's insistence on the involvement of God's "holy, just and good law" in the creation of the yēser may be compared with Jewish trad. which saw God as the author of the yēser (Porter, op.cit. 109,117)

Cf. 11QPs^a 19.15f (cited by M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, Philadelphia 1974 177): "Let neither grief nor evil inclination (yēser ra) possess my bones." (earliest instance of yēser ra?)

A rabb. statement speaks of the yēser as a "king over the 248 members of man" (Abot R.Nat.32a, cited by Schechter, op.cit. 260 and Davies (op.cit 27), a passage linked with Paul's thought. "Antinomy within the Torah"- phrase borrowed from J.L. Martyn, Seminar on Problems in Pauline Theology, Union Theol Seminary, NYork, Fall 1981 The language of Rom 8.3 recalls 6.6 where however it is ho palaios hēmon anthropos, "our old man" who was crucified with Christ that the yēser (= the "body of sin") might be destroyed. Cf Jewett (op.cit.. 290-292) asserts that Paul speaks of the "body of sin" rather than of "flesh of sin" as in 8.3 because in the former passage he is correcting a Gnostic interpretation of baptism. Käsemann (Romans 169) suggests that the phrase "the old man" comes from Adam-Christ typology and refers to "Adam individualized and represented in us." If so, has Paul conflated explanations of evil's origin found in Gen 3 and 5.5;8.21 in Rom 8.6 and 6.6?

This verse provides almost a text-book definition of the yēser (cf G.F. Moore, op.cit) Rom. 13.14 is more likely a reworking of Man.12.2,4 than the opposite. NB the semitic adjectival use of genitive (cf BDF 165) in the phrase ten epithumian tes dikaiosunēs.

The nine unambiguous refs to "Satan", "the tempter" or "the god of this age" are 1Th 2.18;3.5; 1 C 5.5;7.5; 1 C 2.11;4.4;11.14;12.7;R 16.20); cf also 1 C 2.8 ("the rulers of this age") and 1 C 15.24-26; R 8.38 ("principalities and powers")

Over sixty-five uses of the word sarx alone

See K.G.Kuhn, "New Light on Temptation, Sin and Flesh in the NT" (103-104) and W.D. Davies, "Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Flesh and Spirit" (161-162) both in The Scrolls and the NT, Ed. K. Stendhal, NYork, 1957)

See eg Gal.5.17 and hamartia in N.61

Upont-Sommer, Trans.(rv); see also 1QH 4.13-15 and IQS 1.23-24.

I assume that the apocalyptic framework was not so central to Paul the Pharisee as it was to Paul, the Christian apostle. Cf Paul's use of apocalypsis in Gal.1.12 to describe his encounter with Jesus Christ. The modified determinism of the Phars. left room only for a modified dualism (J. Kallas, Jesus and the Power of Satan (Philadelphia, 1968 55-57)] On their suspicion of popular angelology and demonology see J. Bloch, On the Apocalyptic in Judaism (JQRMA II 1952) 28f

cf Martyn's comments in "From Paul to Flannery o'Connor with the Power of Grace", Katallagete (Winter 1981) 13.

J.T. MacCormack.

The History of the Notes

Wesley wrote for "those who reverence the Word of God and have a desire to save their souls."

His purpose was to "assist serious persons, who have not the advantage of learning, in understanding the New Testament." In England there were eight printings of the Notes during Wesley's lifetime; two of these were revised editions, revisions made by Wesley for the 1760 edition and the 1788 edition. Thus it may be assumed that they had a wide readership; they were certainly important to Wesley. He expected them to be read in the Methodist Societies. In a letter to the Societies at Bristol, he advised: "where you have not an experienced preacher, let one of the leaders read the Notes upon the New Testament or the Christian Library."

All large Methodist Societies were directed to provide a copy for the travelling preachers (Stevens: History of Methodism Vol.3, p.397) (Also Journal V. p.189n). Wesley instructed his preachers to read from the Notes in the meetings of the societies and to expound on the New Testament reading from this beginning. The third edition was of a size convenient for carrying in saddle-bags, whereas the 1st., 2nd., 3rd., 5th., and 6th. editions were in quarto. The comment on Matt 5:9 is aimed at preachers: Wesley comments on the structure of the sermon on the Mount and adds: "Is not this the pattern for every Christian preacher - let them not dare to preach without it " (i.e., without a closely connected structure). By the 1760s preachers who wished to be admitted into "connexion" with Mr. Wesley - a word which dates from early Conferences - were asked: Have you read the Sermons and Notes on the N.T.? This is still required of preachers of the Methodist Church of Great Britain, the Methodist Church in Ireland and the United Methodist Church of the U.S.A.

These two works are the standards set in the Model Deed under which trustees of Methodist property are appointed. This deed forbids any preaching contrary to what is in the notes and the Sermons.

Along these paths the Notes have reached an honoured place in Methodism. Furthermore, because an evangelical movement centres in the Gospel, Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament have a natural place in Methodism. They

provide a standard true to Wesley's original purpose - proclaim what he had found, forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ and an assurance of this felt by the believer.

Sources of the Notes

Wesley records in the Preface his desire of many years to put into print what he has learned "in reading, thinking or conversation" concerning the New Testament. He began the writing of the Notes in January 1754 while convalescing after a bout of consumption in November and December 1753, which he regarded as "a loud call to arise and go" to heaven.

Wesley acknowledges that he drew upon four people's works for the Notes. First and foremost is Bengel, a German Lutheran. "It might be of more service to the cause of religion, were I barely to translate his Gnomon Novi Testamenti, than to write many volumes upon it." "Many of his excellent notes I have therefore translated, many more I have abridged." The other three sources were Englishmen, Doddridge and Guyse were Dissenting ministers while Heylyn was a prominent Anglican cleric under whom Wesley was pleased to worship.

Wesley gives the impression that the Notes are largely a borrowing of material from Bengel, supplemented by pieces from the other three sources. This impression is confirmed by the contents of the Preface; paragraphs 1-9 are in the first person singular - Wesley speaking. But immediately Wesley writes in the third person singular, the words are Bengel's. For two pages to the end of the Preface where Wesley is writing "Concerning the Scriptures in general" he is quoting from Bengel almost exclusively. Each book of the New Testament is prefaced by an outline of its contents; these outlines are entirely borrowed from Bengel. As for the commentary itself, long notes are taken from Bengel verbatim, allowing for translation from Latin, e.g., 30 lines on John 1: verses 1-3. But the notes on verses 4,5,6 are not from Bengel, while that on v.7 is, all of its six lines. Then there is nothing from Bengel until verse 14. There is dependence on Bengel but also independence of him. Excluding the Book of Revelation for which Wesley acknowledges his total dependence on Bengel and continuing failure "to understand.....this

mysterious book," an examination of thirty chapters representative of Gospels, epistles both Pauline and other, indicates that only 26 per cent of the notes are dependent on Bengel. As for dependence on Doddridge, only the commentary on Matt to Acts was published when Wesley wrote the Notes. Perhaps 18 per cent of the Notes on these five books are drawn from Doddridge; this is 9 per cent of the total Notes.

Heylyn's work consists of his own translation of the New Testament and commentary on Matt 1-10 to which are added "Select Discourses upon the Principal Points of Revealed Religion." Approximately 7 per cent of the Notes on Mt.1-10 are taken from Heylyn, a very small proportion of the total Notes upon the New Testament.

Guyse's work covers the whole of the New Testament and was completed two years before Wesley began the Notes. John Lawson, the author of the introduction to the Notes in the new edition of Wesley's Works regards Guyse as "responsible for quite a large number of important notes." but because Guyse is a strict Calvinist, Wesley passes over many of his comments. Thus Guyse was "used less extensively than Doddridge." Judging then by Wesley's use of Doddridge, Guyse's contribution would be less than 9 per cent.

On these estimates, less than 50 per cent of the Notes excluding Revelation, is attributable to Wesley's named sources; at least 50 per cent is due to Wesley himself. He is his own man. This can also be seen by looking at the sources themselves. Wesley's Notes occupy one volume of quarto size of 765 pages; the works; the works of Bengel and Doddridge on the New Testament run to five volumes each. Wesley omits a huge amount of material. For example, Bengel's commentary on John 1:1-3 extends to 440 lines; Wesley extracts 30 from these. Bengel's work is more overtly scholarly, directed to the scholarly, examining Hebrew and Greek words and grammar. For example, on Heb.2:7 "who maketh his angels spirits...." Bengel has 12 lines on the Hebrew original and then "But Paul retains the interpretation of the Septuagint." Wesley takes up this point; his note reads: "the apostles constantly cited the Septuagint translation....." Bengel continues his comment: "for the homonymy of the Hebrew word 'Elohim' signifies....."

Wesley knows that homonymy is not of great interest 'to the plain unlettered man who only desires to save his soul.' Thus, from Bengel's comment of 23 lines on Heb 2:7 Wesley extracts less than two. In the sample of 30 chapters, Wesley extracts eight per cent of Bengel's work, and of Doddridge, Guyse and Heylyn even less. His independence is seen in his selectivity.

Wesley's independence is also to be seen in his combining of his sources. An example is to be found in the notes on Matt 1:16 and 17, concerning the words Christ and generations. The notes are composed of five lines from Bengel, followed by nine from Heylyn, then two from Bengel and eleven from Doddridge. Amongst the lines from Heylyn Wesley adds his own significant comment that the title Christ implies the 'prophetic character' - omitted by Heylyn - and that an application of this "We find a total darkness (in ourselves), ignorance of God and the things of God. Here we want Christ in His prophetic office to enlighten our minds and teach us the whole will of God."

A final indicator of Wesley's independence is the use he makes of the words of his sources with a changed meaning in his Notes. On the surprise of the disciples that Jesus "talked with a woman" Wesley explains: "which the Jewish rabbis reckoned scandalous for a man of distinction to do." The words are exactly those of Doddridge, but Doddridge prefaces them with a sentence which shows that he did not believe it to be scandalous! Wesley's dependence on his sources is probably less than fifty per cent of the Notes on Matt to Jude. If he is totally dependent on Bengel for the Notes on Revelation, this dependence may be as much as sixty per cent. Even on this figure, there remains forty per cent of the Notes from Wesley himself, plus the important factors of selectivity and arrangement. The index of a modern book on the philosophy of religion by a physicist lists 196 references to authors and to the Bible, some of which extend to 12 pages. On average, in this book of 229 pages, there are references to other authors on more than 4 pages out of five. By comparison, Wesley's borrowing requirement is modest!

Simply by looking at the closed book, one characteristic is obvious - brevity. Bengel's Gnomon is more than twice the length of the Notes, and he was chided by a friend who feared that his brevity would obscure clarity. Wesley achieves such brevity by the non-repetition of notes. For example, the notes on Matt 19-27 are more than four times as long as those on the corresponding chapters of Mark (10-15). In Mark, Wesley makes no comment on part of the trial of Jesus by the Jews, and all of the denial by Peter, except at the last verse - "he covered his head." The reason for this silence is to be found in the preface to the four Gospels, copies from Bengel. "St. Mark in his Gospel presupposes that of St. Matthew." In Matthew's Gospel Wesley has said all that he considers necessary and comments in Mark mainly at verses where the second evangelist differs from or adds to the first, as at Mark 15:72.

Another reason for non-repetition and therefore for brevity is the unity of Scripture. This unity is stated in the general Preface to the Notes and in the preface to the four Gospels. "St. Mark in his Gospel presupposes that of St. Matthew and supplies what is omitted therein. St. Luke supplies what is omitted by both the former; St. John, what is omitted by all the three." Following what he believes to be the example of Scripture, Wesley explains the term Christ at Mt. 1:16, but not at Matt. 16:16 - "thou art the Christ" - where we might rather expect the explanation, as the more important text. Because Wesley has no comment about the term Christ as Matt. 16:16, it must not be concluded that he is weak on Christology; the explanation of the term at 1:16 holds for 16:16 also, because Scripture is a unity. Vice versa, it is not permissible to pick out a comment on a particular verse and say "Thus believes Wesley." He may deal with the same point in relation to another verse or verses. His comments and therefore his belief on any particular point must be gathered from the whole Notes.

Another characteristic is indicated by the adjective in the title - Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament. The Notes clarify words or events. For example, "liable to the judgment" of Matt. 5:21 is clarified thus: "this refers to the court of twenty-three found in every city" This prevents any misapplication of the word. Similarly

on John 4:27 "upon this came his disciples and marvelled that he talked with a woman;" The unspoken questions of the disciples are clarified by the note: "yet none said - to the woman "what seekest thou? - or to Christ "Why talkest thou with her?" The second question is clear without a note from Wesley, but the first may not have been clear to "plain unlettered men" of whom I was one until I read Wesley's note.

A distinctive characteristic, and another reason for brevity, is that Wesley wrote to "assist serious persons....in understanding the New Testament."

That the word 'assist' is carefully chosen is proved by its use in letters which Wesley wrote to various people who "want to know God in order to enjoy Him in time and eternity, All that you want to know of Him is contained in one book, the Bible. Therefore your one point is to understand this..... spend at least two hours every day in reading and meditating upon the Bible..... If you would save yourself the trouble of thinking, add Mr. Henry's Comment: you would only be assisted in your thinking, add the Explanatory Notes." (Letter to Margaret Lewen, June 1764) In a letter written at the time when the Notes were being prepared for the first edition, Wesley warned: "you are in danger if you despise or lightly esteem reason.....an excellent gift from God" (Letters Vol.3, p.129) Wesley wishes to assist his readers to understand God; this is essential if they are to love God with all their mind. He will not, cannot, do their thinking for them. An example is to be found at Matt 20:15 where Wesley is refuting Matthew Henry's interpretation. Although he violently disagrees with this interpretation, he is very brief and puts his disagreement in the form of a question "But can it be inferred from hence.....?" The answer expected is negative, but Wesley leaves the reader to make it for himself.

As the New Testament is the record of God's supreme revelation of himself in Jesus Christ, Notes on it ought to cover all aspects of Christianity. To review Wesley's teaching on every aspect of Christian faith and practice would be impossible on this occasion; a selection must be made. Wesley was an evangelist first of all; whatever ability he had of organisation was used

to preserve the fruits of his evangelising or to prepare the ground for it. It seems appropriate then to examine first what the Notes say about Christ, who, according to the note on Mark 1:1, is 'both the messenger and the message' of the evangel.

The climax of the opening verses of the first Gospel is the claim that Jesus is Christ. Wesley's note explains the terms Jesus and Christ:

"Jesus who is called Christ" - The name Jesus respects chiefly the promise of blessing made to Abraham; the name Christ, the promise of the Messiah's kingdom which was made to David."

Thus, at the outset Wesley identifies Jesus as the means of universal blessing promised at Gen.12:3, and as the ruler anointed by God, promised at Is. (:7 and 11:1. Then follows a paragraph mainly borrowed from Heylyn

It may be further observed, that the word Christ in Greek, and Messiah in Hebrew, signify 'Anointed': and imply the prophetic, priestly and royal characters which were to meet in the Messiah. Among the Jews, anointing was the ceremony whereby prophets, priests, and kings were initiated into those offices. And if we look into ourselves, we shall find a want of Christ in all these respects. We are by nature at a distance from God, alienated from Him, and incapable of a free access to Him. Hence we want a Mediator, an Intercessor: in a word a Christ in His priestly office. This regards our state with respect to God. And with respect to ourselves, we find a total darkness, blindness, ignorance of God, and the things of God. Now here we want Christ in His prophetic office to enlighten our minds, and teach us the whole will of God. We find also within us a strange misrule of appetites and passions. For these we want Christ in His royal character, to reign in our hearts, and subdue all things to Himself. (Words underlined - Wesley).

Wesley's own contribution to this paragraph is unnoticeable because it is couched in the same language as the extract from Heylyn. However, it is significant; Wesley wishes to make clear the full nature of Jesus Christ. This desire is evident again at 1:21 where the note is: "Jesus - that is, a Saviour. It is the same name with Joshua (who was a type of Him) which properly signifies 'The Lord, salvation.'" Yet again at v.23:

thus was He called Emmanuel, which was no common name of Christ, but points out His nature and office: as He is God incarnate, and dwells, by His Spirit, in the hearts of His people. It is observable, the words in Isaiah are, 'Thou' (namely, His mother) 'shalt call'; but here, *They*—that is, all His people, *shall call*—shall acknowledge Him to be Emmanuel, God with us. Which being interpreted—This is a clear proof that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Greek, and not in Hebrew.

For Wesley, Jesus is God incarnate. It is worth noting that the Christological statement is followed by an experiential statement - he dwells, by his Spirit, in the hearts of His people. And also worthy of note is the observation that "the words in Isaiah are Thou (namely his mother) shalt call, but here They, that is all his people...shall acknowledge him to be God with us." This is also a fact of experience for each believer.

If to the above is added the comment on v.25, referring to virginity of Mary, Wesley's Christological position is made clear at the very beginning of the New Testament as far as the text permits: Jesus is the anointed Saviour, promised in the Old Testament, born of a virgin; He is God incarnate, dwelling and ruling in His people. Other comments gleaned from notes on Matthew's Gospel, proclaim Jesus as Son of God (2:15; 3:2; 3:17; 4:1,4; 4:9; 12:49-50; 17:26;), as Lord (in the O.T. sense and therefore God, 3:3; 5:22) as God (9:3; 10:5; 25:9, 14; 28:18) as sinless (3:16) as Son of Man (3:2; 8:20).

Wesley has more to say about Christology in the notes on John's Gospel, because he considered St. John to have written in order to refute "those who denied His (Christ's) Godhead." At John 1:1 Wesley comments "When at length some began to doubt of His Godhead, then St. John expressly asserted it." This comment extends to 24 lines. It roots the term "word" firmly in the O.T. via the LXX. Jesus as the word, is "supreme, eternal, independent". But as a balance to that strong adjective, Wesley notes that the word rendered "with" denotes a perpetual tendency...of the Son to the Father, in unity of essence. Other Christological statements are to be found throughout the Notes on John's Gospel at 9 places (3:13; 5:19,23; 8:16; 10:18, 30; 16:15; 20:17, and remarkable comment at 11:41), at four places in Colossians (1:15,17; 2:9; 3:16) a very long note, by Wesley's standards, on Hebrew 1:2-9.

The note at John 4:26 identifies the Word of John's Gospel with Messiah of Matthew's. Thus Jesus who is the fulfilment of prophecy in Matthew's Gospel, as the Word in John's, is "creator of all things" (1:3) and "foundation of life to every living thing and fountain of wisdom, holiness and happiness" (1:4) The Word "united himself to our miserable nature with all its innocent infirmities" (1:14) and through His whole life the glory of God was revealed (1:14) Jesus is God (John 8:24 Acts 7:59; Roms 9:5; Heb 3:4; 1 Cor.2:8) and Christians pray to Him "as well as to the Father through Him" (1 Cor. 1:2; 8:6).

The humanity of Jesus is also stated, especially at Phil. 2:7-8 - "a real man, like other men...a common man, without any peculiar excellence or comeliness". In the comment on the words "he dismissed His spirit" (Wesley's translation) in Matthew 27:50, he combines the divine and human natures of Christ. "He died by a voluntary act of His own, and in a way peculiar to Himself....dying....like the Prince of Life, and now enthroned in the glory of God the Father" (Phil.2:11).

Themes of the Notes

The notes about God would find acceptance by most Christians, at most points. But attention must be drawn to two aspects of Wesley's teaching about God, because these bear on the atonement, which will be considered in a moment.

For Wesley the wrath of God is very real. The note on Roms 5:9 makes it clear that he understood it of God in an analogical sense, but equally so is love attributable to God. Inasmuch as the love of God is real so is His wrath. But God is also love; the note on 1 John 4:8 is without an equal:

"God is love - This little sentence brought St. John more sweetness, even in the time he was writing it, than the whole world can bring. God is often styled holy, righteous, wise; but not holiness, righteousness or wisdom in the abstract, as He is said to be love: intimating that this is His..darling, His reigning attribute, the attribute that sheds an amiable glory on all His other perfections."

Within this "darling attribute," the righteousness of God is to be understood. It "includes both justice and

mercy and is eminently shown in condemning sin and yet justifying the sinner" (Roms 1:17). The comment on 1 John 1:9 takes this thought a stage further:

Just—Surely then He will punish: no; for this very reason He will pardon. This may seem strange; but upon the evangelical principle of atonement and redemption it is undoubtedly true; because, when the debt is paid, or the purchase made, it is the part of equity to cancel the bond, and consign over the purchased possession. Both to forgive us our sins - To take away all the guilt of them. And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness—To purify our souls from every kind and every degree of it.

It is the part of equity, justice, to cancel the bond, to forgive. Hence Wesley can interpret justified at Romans 3:24 as "pardoned and accepted", (and at other verses also).

The necessity of pardon arises from human sin. This is the next theme to be examined.

James 3:9 states that men (are) made after the likeness of God. Wesley notes: "Indeed they have now lost this likeness; yet there remains from thence an indelible nobleness which we ought to reverence both in ourselves and others."

This "indelible nobleness" is the reason why Wesley can read heathen or unbelieving authors and learn from them. This ability to recognise some remnant of God's likeness makes, by contrast, Wesley's account of sin all the more severe. The note on Luke 15:12 is as brief and as explosive as a bomb:

"Give me the part of goods that falleth to me - See the root of all sin - a desire of disposing of ourselves, of independency on God!"

And sin is our own fault, not the Devil's. On James 1:14, Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own desire - Wesley comments:

"In the beginning of the temptation...(he is) drawn out of God His strong refuge. By his own desire - We are therefore to look for the cause of every sin, in, not out of, ourselves. Even the injections of the Devil cannot hurt before we make them our own."

"All have sinned" (Roms3:23) and Wesley comments: "In Adam and in their own person; by a sinful nature, sinful tempers and sinful actions." Sin is a fact of life, as well as a theme of theology. Because "death has reigned over all" as Paul writes in Roms 5:12,14,19. Wesley concludes: that even infants who have "never

sinned in their own persons" are amongst those who "were constituted sinners." The old man which has been crucified with Christ is co-evil with our being and as old as the Fall (Rom 6:6). On Ephesians 2:1 Wesley says: (you are) "dead; absolutely devoid of life, and as incapable of quickening yourselves as persons literally dead." And again on the phrase of John "lieth in the wicked one" - "Void of life, void of sense. In this short expression the horrible state of the world is painted in the most lively colours." Such is "every man that hath not the Spirit." (1Cor2:14) "The corruption of human nature" notes Wesley at Gal.5:21., spreads through all the powers of the soul, as well as all the members of the body." Wesley's phrase for this condition is "entire depravity."

The condition of men and women and the response of God are made clear at John 3:3 -

3. *Jesus answered* - That knowledge will not avail thee, unless thou be born again - Otherwise thou canst not see, that is, experience and enjoy, either the inward or the glorious kingdom of God.

In this solemn discourse our Lord shows that no external profession, no ceremonial ordinances, or privileges of birth, could entitle any to the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom: that an entire change of heart, as well as of life, was necessary for that purpose; that this could only be wrought in man by the almighty power of God; that every man born into the world was by nature in a state of sin, condemnation, and misery; that the free mercy of God had given His Son to deliver them from it, and to raise them to a blessed immortality; that all mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews, might share in these benefits, procured by His being lifted up on the cross, and to be received by faith in Him; but that, if they rejected Him, their eternal, aggravated condemnation would be the certain consequence.

The note on Rom. 8:9 supplements this: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ - dwelling and governing in him He is none of His - He is not...a Christian."

Salvation comes through Jesus (Matt.1:16,21) whom God set forth "a propitiation - to appease an offended God.. ..To declare His righteousness - To demonstrate not only His clemency but His justice; even that vindictive justice whose essential character and principal office is to punish sin." (Roms 3:25) And on the next verse Wesley comments: God has shown "his justice on His own Son." The death of Jesus shows God "to be strictly and inviolably righteous in the administration of His government, even while He is the merciful justifier of the sinner that believeth in Jesus. The attribute of justice must be preserved inviolate, and inviolate it is preserved, if there was a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour. On this plan all the attributes harmonise; every attribute

is glorified and not one superseded, no, not so much as clouded." Again, at 1 Peter 2:24 Jesus "bore our sins" - that is, the punishment due to them. At least ten other notes interpret the death of Jesus in the same language. The result of His death is explained at Col.1:14 "The voluntary passion of our Lord appeased the Father's wrath, obtained pardon and acceptance for us and consequently dissolved the dominion and power which Satan had over us through our sin. So that forgiveness is the beginning of redemption as the resurrection is the completion of it."

Three points should be borne in mind so that this explanation of the death of Jesus is not distorted. The first is implicit in the word voluntary (at Col.1:14) The same idea occurs at John 17:19: "I devote myself, as a victim, to be sacrificed" - so Wesley interprets the words of Jesus. Jesus is active in this matter of atonement. He endured His sufferings "in obedience to the will of His Father." (Heb 5:7) There are a dozen other notes to the same intent, especially John 12:27, "for His heart was fixed in choosing the will of His Father, " Jesus chose to die.

The second point to be borne in mind is that the result of Christ's death is interpreted in terms of forgiveness and acceptance, not in terms of law. In fact, the death of Jesus has put an end to the law, and ushered in the reign of grace. All are justified, for Wesley this means, all are "pardoned and accepted" (Rom. 3:24). Wesley has similar notes at eight other places (Titus 3:5; Rom. 3:30; 8:30; 1 Cor.6:11; Eph. 2:16; John 1:14; Rom 5:11; 2 Cor 8:12)

Lastly, Wesley regards love as God's "darling attribute, His reigning attribute." Any attempt to understand his references to punishment and justice must be made in the light of that "darling attribute" and within the limits of that reigning attribute."

This supremacy of love is seen again in Wesley's comments about grace. At 1 Cor 8:9 it is "the most sincere, most free and most abundant love." And at Gal 2:21 it is "the free love of God in Christ Jesus." (Similarly at Eph. 2:5,8; also Roms 3:24). The supremacy of grace which is love, the "darling attribute" is described at Heb. 4:16 The Note reads:

"Let us therefore come boldly - Without any doubt or fear Unto the throne of God, our reconciled Father, even His throne of grace - Grace erected it, and reigns there and dispenses all blessings in a way of mere unmerited favour." (And similarly at Roms 5:21)

Grace is a motion drawing people to the Father (John 6:44) "all men under heaven, even those that despise His love and will for that cause finally perish." (John 3:16) There are similar comments at Acts 10:34 and 1 Tim 2:3. Some "finally perish" because grace though "strong and sweet" is "yet still resistible" (John 6:44) (Also Roms 8:19 and John 3:16) There are some who "thrust salvation from them." (Acts 13:48) And grace can be rejected even after it has been accepted. The note on 1 Cor 9:27 is a clear warning:

I myself should become a reprobate - Disapproved by the Judge, and so falling short of the prize. This single text may give us a just notion of the scriptural doctrine of election and reprobation; and clearly shows us, that particular persons are not in Holy Writ represented as elected absolutely and unconditionally to eternal life, or predestinated absolutely and unconditionally to eternal death; but that believers in general are elected to enjoy the Christian privileges on earth; which if they abuse, those very elect persons will become reprobate. St. Paul was certainly an elect person, if ever there was one; and yet he declares it was possible he himself might become a reprobate. Nay, he actually would have become such, if he had not thus kept his body under, even though he had been so long an elect person, a Christian, and an apostle.

Wesley denies that Rom. 9 has anything to do with individuals. Jacob and Esau represent two groups of people - Jewish and Gentile. With regard to the phrase "as many as were ordained to eternal life" at Acts 13:48, Wesley notes that "St. Luke does not say foreordained." He is not speaking of what was done from eternity but of what was then done through the preaching of the Gospel. The note on Eph 1:5 where the Authorised Version reads "predestinated us" is remarkably similar to Wm. Barclay's translation of the passage in his Daily Study Bible.

Wesley believes that men and women respond to the offer of God in Jesus. But how can they do this if they are "dead, void of life" and entirely depraved? This is made possible by God's prevenient grace, the grace that comes to us before the act of salvation. The light shines in the darkness says John (1:5) and Wesley adds: "even on fallen man but dark sinful man perceives it not." The light shines in every man "by what is vulgarly called natural conscience." In a sermon on Conscience Wesley

expands this note; "properly speaking it is not natural but a supernatural gift of God above all His natural endowments No; it is not nature but the Son of God that is the 'true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.' So that we may say to every human creature "He, not nature, hath showed thee, O Man, what is good." (Williams pp.42-43)**

Thus, at Romans 2:14 when the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in God's law they do it "by preventing grace." On the following verse Wesley proclaims that "the same hand which wrote the commandments on the tables of stone" wrote "the substance" in people's hearts. Wesley describes grace as "the inward power of the Holy Ghost." Thus prevenient grace is another expression for the work of the Holy Spirit as stated in John 16:8-9. He works in unbelievers to convince them of sin and thereby to present them with the choice of accepting or rejecting the righteousness which Christ offers. By His grace "alone we can come to the Father." (2 Cor.13:13)

Wesley proclaimed himself "a man of one book" and begged - "O give me that book". (Preface to the sermons) In Scotland in 1766 he affirmed: "My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible bigot. I follow it in all things both great and small." (Journal Vol.5pp.169 for 5 June 1766) The Notes at various places make this abundantly clear. The Preface describes Scripture as "a most solid and precious system of divine truth. Every part thereof is worthy of God." (Para 10). Paul writes to the Corinthians (2:13) "We speak not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit." Wesley adds "such are all the words of Scripture" And later "The apostles wrote nothing which was not divinely inspired." (1 Cor 7:15) Even when Paul says "I speak not after the Lord", Wesley interprets, "not by express command from Him though still under the direction of His Spirit."

As to the nature of inspiration, Wesley has a number of remarks to "assist serious persons..in understanding the New Testament." At John 19:24 - "They parted my garments among them," Wesley observes that there is nothing in the life of David to account for this

** Colin Williams: John Wesley's Theology Today.

(Epworth Press, 1960)

(a quotation from Psalm 22:18) "so that in this scripture as in some others the prophet seems to have been thrown into a preternatural ecstasy, wherein, personating the Messiah, he barely spoke what the Spirit dictated." Wesley limits the idea of dictation to this and some other scriptures. He has no place for a general dictation theory of inspiration according to his next comment on Scripture at Acts 15:7. In the council of Jerusalem, the apostles and elders considered the problem; then Peter rose "after much debate." Wesley notes this phrase: "How really so ever they were inspired, we need not suppose their inspiration was always so instantaneous and express as to supersede any deliberation in their own minds or any consultation with each other." Thus, for Wesley inspiration works through human means - through inner reflection and group consultation.

Inspiration is not verbal. Concerning a quotation from the Old Testament, Wesley says: "The apostles did not always think it necessary exactly to transcribe the passages they cited but contented themselves with giving the general sense, though with some diversity of language."

Concerning the interpretation of Scripture, Wesley comments that our Lord did not turn the other cheek when He was smitten in the judgment scene, and thus the command to turn the other cheek is not to be taken literally (Notes: Matt.5:40-41). Similarly when our Lord commands the apostles - "You ought also to wash one another's feet" - Wesley asks: "And why did they not? - they knew He never designed that this should be taken literally." The meaning of the example and command must be found by the use of commonsense and reason and this is far more important than the literal application of the words.

Wesley recognises that there are inconsistencies in scripture, verses where literal truth cannot be sustained. The very first note addresses itself to this - the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew. "If there were any difficulties in this genealogy or that given by St. Luke....they would rather affect the Jewish tables than the credit of the evangelists for they act only as historians... These accounts sufficiently answer the end for which they are recited....that Jesus was of the family from which the promised seed was to come." Wesley knows that the statement in the genealogy

MacCormack, Wesley, IBS 8, January 1986.

"Jehoram begat Uzziah", is not literally the case; he was his great-great-grandfather. Wesley interprets: "He begat him mediately as Christ is mediately the seed of David." Wesley uses reason to interpret Scriptures even though he has a very high regard for its inspiration, "a most precious system of Divine truth." The genealogy proved to the people of that time that Jesus was in the line of the Messiah, and this is its purpose. Inaccuracies of detail are unimportant; the list is sufficient for the purpose for which it was written.

Nevertheless, Wesley strives to interpret Scripture literally wherever possible. For example, he harmonises the various accounts of Peter's denial (Luke 22:56) and affirms that the beatitudes were given on two occasions, on a mountain in Matthew 5 and on a plain in Luke 6.

The Notes confirm the high regard for Scripture which Wesley shows in his other writings, links their interpretation to commonsense and reason, but limits the use of these two faculties to places where it is impossible to accept the literal meaning of the words or where examples in Scripture show that the literal application was not followed.

Despite this high regard for Scripture, or perhaps because of it, Wesley dares to change the Authorised Version - "revised by His Majesty's special command", and Wesley was a Royalist. The reason is given in the Preface; although he believes "the common English translation is the best", he is also sure that it can be brought nearer to the original; it was made from Greek copies "not always the most correct" and so Wesley makes "here and there a small alteration." (Preface para.4) For example, straight into his English text above the comments, Wesley inserts "happy" for "bless are the poor" in the beatitudes, and in 1 Cor.13, love for charity. The doxology of Jude reads in the text of the notes, "to the only God our Saviour," omitting the word "wise" of the A.V. Wesley knows there is something wrong at 1 John 5: 7-8, the verses about the three witnesses; he changes the order of these two verses in his Text. This is Wesley's idea

of a "small alteration." Again, the A.V. at Hebrews 4:8 reads "If Jesus had given them rest." Wesley corrects this and his text reads "If Joshua had given them rest" and thus it has appeared in English versions from the RV onwards. Wesley has altered the AV at 4000 places; some of these are simply the removal of archaic words e.g., "paralytic" for "palsy" of the AV; some involve the replacement of the AV word by a word Wesley considers more suitable, e.g., Jesus "sat at table" in Matthew's house, not "at meat," of the AV.; some depend on a correct understanding of the Greek, e.g. for "can add one cubit to his stature" Wesley has "can add to his age the smallest measure." Some of Wesley's alterations are not successful, e.g., Peter's appeal to Jesus to think again about going to Jerusalem to death becomes "Favour yourself Lord!" This is not the place to assess the value of Wesley alterations; the purpose of these references to the alterations is to demonstrate Wesley's attitude to the Text. Wesley was certain of the inspiration of Scripture and its truth. But he will not be fooled by copyists' mistakes, or poor translation, or inadequate regard for the best manuscripts. He must find these and the true meaning of the Greek. Nor can he stop at literal interpretation when the text implies something deeper and wider.

The Value of the Notes in the late twentieth century

On this occasion let us address ourselves to the question; what can Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the New Testament teach Christians of differing traditions? (1) One of the peculiarities of the Notes is their origin. Wesley, logical and widely read as he was, evangelical and clear as he was concerning what he himself believed, leaned on others, sometimes heavily. Bengel was a Lutheran, an academic and for the last twelve years of his life, a government appointee. Heylyn was an Anglican, the Church which at the time of the writing of the Notes, had closed many of its doors to Wesley. He spent all his ministry in a city church, and was also chaplain to the Court. Both of these men were far removed from the form of ministry which Wesley established for himself and his preachers and far removed from the kind of people which Wesley's movement in general touched. Wesley was thankful for their commentaries. The other two sources, Doddridge and Guyse, were

dissenting ministers, opposed to the Church of England with which Wesley remained in communion to his death. They were also Calvinistic with which view Wesley disagreed strongly.

These sources of the Notes set us an example of accepting truth from others however different they may be from us. This conclusion is supported by the variety of the authors whose works Wesley edited for his Christian Library - early Fathers of the Church, mediaeval mystics, Puritan, Dissenting and also Established churchmen. The truth of God comes to us from many directions of the spiritual compass.

(2) Wesley's attitude to Scripture is instructive, even in the late twentieth century. High opinion as he had of the A.V., he sought the true Greek text. He dared to alter it on the basis of Manuscript evidence mostly provided by Bengel. How much more so today when discoveries of codices and papyri of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are numbered in thousands, and when discoveries of first century commercial and private documents reveal the everyday usage of the Greek words used in the New Testament. The Notes teach us to seek the original words used by God's servants, and the true meaning of these in their context.

(3) As for inspiration of the Scriptures, Wesley is certain that "in the language of the sacred writings God speaks...not as man but as God." (Preface para 12) Nevertheless, he does not jettison reason. "It is a fundamental principle with us" that to renounce reason is to renounce religion, that religion and reason go hand in hand and that all irrational religion is false religion." (Letters Vol.5p.384). When this is applied to a specific Biblical passage, it requires the twentieth century Christian to accept results of geology, biology, astronomy and physics, and allows him at the same time to say, for example, of Genesis 1-2, as Wesley says of Matthew 1, "these accounts sufficiently answer the end for which they are recited. They unquestionably prove the grand point in view" - in this case, that God created the universe, that man is the climax of His creation, made in God's image with responsibility for God's creation. The Bible is to be

understood from the point of view of its own purposes - namely, in Wesley's words, "God hath condescended to teach the way (to heaven). He hath written it down in a book." (Preface to the Sermons). Reason and religion to hand in hand.

(4) The Notes are on the New Testament; they are written on the whole of the NT. They do not omit parts which Wesley did not understand. The Notes, then, as a standard of a Church point to the completeness of teaching concerning the way to heaven. That way lies through the labyrinth of the human mind, the dangerous streets of the political city, the comfortable avenues of social life and the open spaces of the universe. The Bible seen in the light of God's supreme revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus, has much to say on all aspects of human life.

For Methodists this respect for Scripture as applicable to all spheres of life is re-inforced by the variety of the Forty-four Standard Sermons. These range over matters of faith and of practice - from the New Birth to the Use of Money, and from Salvation by Faith to The Cure of Evil Speaking. The Notes as a standard remind us that the Word of God applies to every aspect of life.

(5) As a standard, the Notes on the N.T. point to the supreme importance of the New Testament of the Lord Jesus. As our Constitution says: "The Notes and the Sermons "are not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative theology on Methodist preachers, but to set up standards of preaching and belief which should secure loyalty to the fundamental truths of the Gospel of Redemption." The record of this Gospel is in the N.T. which is thus of supreme importance. Wesley wrote the explanatory Notes "to assist people...in their thinking," not to do it for them. Our interpretation, even Wesley's interpretation, must not be equated with Scripture.

However, this insistence on the supremacy of Scripture is too simplistic an attitude towards doctrine to be left at this point. We are not automated trains on an automated railway system - stopping when the red light shows, proceeding cautiously when the yellow glows, and going ahead merrily when the green shines. The supremacy of Scripture is meaningless without an understanding of it

However for Wesley Scripture is overwhelmingly clear at certain places, for example, the commandments of our Lord Jesus. To the words of Jesus to the questioner - "This do and thou shalt live" - Wesley adds: "He and he alone shall live forever, who thus loves God and his neighbour in this present life." If our differing understandings of Scripture cause us to part, and then to break this commandment, we are doomed.

One place at which Christians divide often, is the understanding of the Atonement. The Explanatory Notes on Rom. 3:24-26 are very clear as to what Wesley understood to be the meaning of the Atonement. God's justice was shown in this act. However disagreeable this may be to some Christians, a number of points which Wesley makes, if borne in mind, help to an acceptance of this interpretation.

(a) It must be understood in the light of God's love, "His darling, His reigning attribute" (1 John 4:8)

(b) "On this plan all the attributes harmonize...and not one superseded." (Roms 3:26) (c) At the death of Jesus, the judicial age finishes; the age of grace begins. Thus for Wesley, justified means "pardoned and accepted", not judicially acquitted.

(d) The use Wesley made of this interpretation is instructive of its place for him and for us. In the index of the Forty-Four Standard sermons, there is no entry of the words "wrath", "punishment" "substitution". The sermon on Salvation by Faith quotes phrases from Roms 3:25 and Col.2:14 but does not use the word wrath. The reason for this silence may be found in the Minutes of the Conference 1746. "Speaking much of the wrath of God and little of the love of God.... generally hardens them that believe not and discourages them that do."

Wesley acknowledges the truth of this view of the Atonement. Its place in the Notes indicates that preachers and serious students of the Bible should grapple with the truth contained therein. But its absence from the Standard Sermons and the Conference warning indicate that there are better roads along which to lead people to salvation. Perhaps such a view of the atonement can only be appreciated by those who have experienced salvation, for the Notes which contain this view, were to be used in the Society meetings.

If this is a correct interpretation of the place of Wesley's understanding of the Atonement, in the Methodist movement, can it help us in other matters which divide Christians?

(6) Finally, the Notes were written for those who "desire to save their souls." They were written in the midst of an expanding evangelising and teaching movement - for the evangelists and for the evangelised. They set us a standard of interpreting Scripture, - namely, so to proclaim the message of God given in Christ that the hearers, in the words of Wesley's comment on the new birth, may "experience that great inward change by the spirit."

The Notes set us a standard of urgency. Every now and then the reader is directly addressed. The Markan account of the two great commandments closes with the words of Jesus: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." Wesley continues: "Reader, art not thou? Then go on, be a real Christian; else it had been better for thee to have been afar off." (Mark 12:34)

Note 1:

This is part of an inaugural lecture delivered in Union Theological College, Belfast on Monday, 7th October, 1985. The Rev. J.T. MacCormack B.A., B.D., is a Tutor at Edgehill College, Belfast.

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John Drury The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory.
London, SPCK, 1985, pp.xi + 180. £6.95.

this provocative study Drury sets out to show how the authors of the gospels understood the parables in the sequence of what they wrote. In doing so he rejects any attempt to explain them in terms of their original situation in the life of Jesus in the way to which we have been accustomed. The work of Jeremias and Dodd. Indeed Drury finds himself unable to place many of them back to any such situation and regards them as compositions of the evangelists. He is clearly correct when he emphasises the difficulty of discovering an original meaning and situation in the life of Jesus but wrong when he implies that this task should not be undertaken. He cannot abandon all interest in the historical Jesus. However what he has done positively in setting the parables within the sequence of the gospel narratives far outweighs his rather frequent attacks on Jeremias.

Drury's contribution is a continuation of redaction criticism and follows the present stress on the need to grasp the whole flow of each gospel rather than on the details of modification of particular incidents by each evangelist. He begins by examining the 'parable' form as it appeared in the Old Testament and Jewish literature prior to the gospels and looks at its few usages by Paul. In this light parables are seen to be much more than illustrative stories. Mark when he came to use them was aware of this and thus employs them so as to illuminate the total story he is telling. That is a little misleading for apparently Mark did not receive some of the parables from the tradition but composed them with this purpose in mind. Drury writes about the 'Sower' 'Instead of a parable of Jesus inserted in a narrative, we are beginning to see a parable of Mark's (it may be so) too by some undiscoverable route of tradition - we cannot tell' and 'fully and intricately set in the narrative as an elucidation of it.' Despite the saving parenthesis it appears Drury attributes the parable to Mark for he has previously given some statistical detail drawn from E.J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel*, which he believes show the parables to be Marcan. Unfortunately he has not fully understood the work of Pryke and if he checks p.156 of Pryke's book he will see that Pryke does not consider the parable to be Marcan. More generally Drury forgets that when people retell stories their own style and vocabulary enter into what they say. Further in arguing that Mark uses the parable for interpretative purposes within his narrative he forgets that Mark was writing in a Christian community and that therefore it is not necessary to fill in the details of vv.13-20 fulfilled within the remainder of the gospel. Mark may be relating them to the external life of the community. Generally speaking Drury leaves out the relation of the gospel to the community for which and in which it was written. This is just as important for its understanding as the flow of the narrative.

When we turn to Luke we find that Drury rejects Q and sees Luke as dependent on both Mark and Matthew. Where he is not then he has created the parables he uses in order to assist the flow of his narrative. In particular, to take an example which Drury treats in detail, Luke composed the parable of the Prodigal Son. Again Drury resorts to statistical evidence to prove his point and again he forgets that anyone repeating a story will inevitably allow some of their own language to enter into the retelling. Even in the passages Luke has drawn from Mark there is clear evidence of changes in their retelling. How much evidence from style and vocabulary

is required to show an author is not rewriting material he has taken from elsewhere? If we are to make any progress here we require a number of 'control' passages, i.e. passages we can be sure Luke wrote and passages which we can be sure he borrowed. Drury does not provide us with such controls. Oddly he has remarked on p.40 'A parable by Jesus cannot be restored without constant reference to unassailably genuine work by Jesus.' He should take his own advice to heart when he treats Mark and Luke!

Drury has done valuable work in showing how the parables are used by the respective evangelists (he also considers the parables of Matthew) to assist their teaching. A large part of what he has done remains true even if they did not themselves compose the parables they use. There is a lot then to be learnt from this book, especially in relation to the presence of allegory in the parables. It is a pity Drury has confused the issue by allowing himself to be drawn aside from the necessary task he set himself into examining the origin of the material, more especially when he has not understood how to go about this.

Ernest Best.

Robert G. Crawford, The Saga of God Incarnate, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1985, pp.xiii & 106. Distributed by T & T Clark, Edinburgh.

Among the most significant of recent contributions to the science of biblical interpretation is Hans Frei's The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven, 1974), a sustained indictment of 18th and 19th century hermeneutics. In contrast to the "realism" with which the Reformers read the Bible, post-critical method, says Frei, has presumed a disjunction between word and meaning. The latter no longer resides in the occurrence or portrayal of historical or "history-like" actions, but in the timeless universal human experiences whose symbolic, mythic expression lies hidden beneath Scripture's statements and stories. Robert Crawford is one of several (Col Gunton being another, in Yesterday and Today, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), who have now utilised Frei's category of "realistic narrative" against the contemporary reduction of the Incarnation to "myth." His timely, and wholly appropriate, case is that, while the biblical narratives are not biography, or plain "factual" history (if such exists), the faithful imagination and creativity of the writers do not remove their material from contact with the realm of historical occurrence and investigation.

It is greatly to Crawford's credit that instead of dismissing the "mythographers" (he has the likes of John Hick and Maurice Wiles in mind) he himself wishes to "understand Christology in a more modern way" (p.xi), and hence to deal honestly and creatively with the difficulties posed for classical Christology by the rise of historical and scientific consciousness. In his most successful chapter (pp.18ff), he seeks an interpretation of "divine activity" consonant with Scripture but intelligible to that modern outlook. He is less persuasive in suggesting a shorthand for Frei's "realistic narrative" (p.9 et passim). It is well-known that Karl

used "saga" to define the urgeschichtlich creation narratives. May we place in the same genre the essentially temporal, particularisable stories of Jesus of Nazareth? Given the associations of saga with stylised and embroidered Nordic legends, and with interminable, unaltered plots in fiction and current affairs, would the "general reader" the book addresses be much less misled by this description of the Gospels than by "myth"?

Worrying by far is the content assigned here to "the saga of God incarnate." "What kind of reality are we dealing with?", the author asks. "God become man or a man supremely conscious of the divine presence?" (p.14). Given his wish to clarify how "God acts in history" (p.15), and to preserve the doctrine, if not the language, of Chalcedon (p.16), one might assume that Dr. Crawford intends the first answer to his own question. But the weight of evidence points to the second; and, ironically, that he has reverted precisely to the 19th-century Christology produced by the hermeneutics which Frei criticises. With echoes of Schleiermacher, and even Harnack, the story is told here in vivid, charismatic character (pp.35, 40f), "the greatest personal-ism the world has known" (p.47), with unique God-consciousness and intimate harmony with the will of the Father. Eschewing both "Logos" Christology, for that of unsurpassed moral behaviour (and suggesting that the evangelists wrote in order to "inculcate good morals and moral virtue" (p.37), Crawford argues that only in the course of his temporal existence did Jesus achieve that perfect humanity of total dedication which united God and man (pp.47f). Following Pannenberg, he then takes the resurrection to confirm retroactively that Jesus has been Son of God all along, and indeed from God's perspective, where all is compresent, the Son eternally (p.49).

But, to say that "from our viewpoint Jesus became the Son [while] from the viewpoint of God's eternity, God was always one with Jesus" (p.50), is surely to perpetuate the static dualistic assumptions about time and space which motivate today's mythologising of the incarnation. It denies, at the most crucial point, the dynamic possibility that from our viewpoint time, space and flesh, the eternal Son has dwelt, finite, visible and tangible. And with the intersection of eternity and time thus excluded, it is inevitable that Chalcedon's homoousion and hypostatic union will appear "impersonal" and static (pp. 50ff, 83f) - as threats to the reality of Jesus, rather than attempts precisely to secure his humanity by ascribing its origin and reality to the eternal, triune God who calls us to us in grace and freedom "for our sake and our salvation."

It is indeed its lack of soteriology which convinces one that this saga is not that of the biblical narratives. The cross is barely visible; and his resurrection confirms an identity between the charismatic Jesus, and God, it does not disclose the identity of the crucified as the one in whom God has bowed to sin and death to set us free from both. Yet if God is a mythological symbol, but He "who acts in history," hermeneutics must not relinquish the Good News of his union with sinners for their salvation, to the modern presumption that the best news to hope for is a good man united with God for our inspiration.

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Alan E. Lewis.

Susan Niditch, Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation, Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985, pp.114.

In this fascinating study Niditch approaches the text of Genesis 1-11 as both a literary critic and a cultural anthropologist. Examining the original significance of the Hebrew myths of chaos, creation and cosmos, and briefly tracing their development through to the New Testament period she observes that they have undergone certain transformations in their history.

The main section of her work, however, concentrates on isolating the main creation themes found in Genesis 1-11. According to Niditch two movements dominate the Hebrew creation myths: (a) chaos to order and (b) ideal order to reality. The former of these finds expression in Genesis 1:1-4:4a, 2:4b-25 and 6:5-9:19, the latter in Genesis 3:1-24, 6:1-4 and 11:1-9. To highlight these themes examples are drawn from other non-biblical creation myths.

Although Niditch's approach is particularly interesting her study is marred by various flaws which seriously challenge the validity of her conclusions. Firstly, Niditch makes no attempt to justify the assumption that the different episodes in Genesis 1-11, once enjoyed an independent existence; it is assumed that each unit may be examined independently of the rest. Consequently Niditch wrenches narrative sections from their present context and treats them as self-sufficient units. In doing so she fails to give adequate recognition to the present structure of the text (for example, 2:4b-25 is totally separated from 3:1-24; but see J.T. Walsh, "Genesis 2.4b-3.24: A Synchronic Approach," JBL, 96 (1977) pp. 161-177.) Further, Niditch assumes that the present form and content of the separate sections resemble closely their earlier pre-literary form. No allowance is made, however, for the possibility that the narratives may have been modified when brought together. Any approach which rests upon a hypothetical reconstruction of the original myths is surely fraught with difficulties.

Secondly, Niditch's exegesis of the biblical text is somewhat inadequate. Her interpretation of the Genesis material often seems to be guided, not by a close reading of the text, but rather by predetermined conclusions. Thus, she views the flood narrative (Gen.6:5-9:19) as moving from chaos to cosmos, and sees parallels here with Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Although parallels exist, and the latter part of the flood story clearly portrays a recreation of the earth, it is questionable whether the entire flood episode should be interpreted as a 'movement from Chaos to cosmos.'

Thirdly, Niditch's reading of the Genesis material is also affected by her uncritical use of comparative material. For example, she compares the story of Cain and Abel with Livy's version of the story of Romulus and Remus. This, however, colours her interpretation of the Genesis story. The comparison of passages in Genesis with mythical texts coming from as far afield as Scandinavia, China, America and Australia must surely raise questions concerning the validity of such an approach, especially when these have direct bearing upon the way in which the text of Genesis is interpreted.

Further interdisciplinary studies on the early chapters of Genesis are likely to follow. Let us hope that these are pursued with a greater regard

what the text of Genesis actually states. Ultimately Niditch's interpretation of the material, and her reconstruction of its development, be rejected, lacking as it does a solid exegetical basis.

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T.D. Alexander.

erman Hendrickx, *The Infancy Narratives*. Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1984. pp.vii 145, £4.95. pb.

is one of four "Studies in the Synoptic Gospels" by Hendrickx. Others deal with the Sermon on the Mount, the Passion, the Resurrection. began during 1975-1979 in the Philippines at Manila's East Asian Central Institute as courses in high-grade exegesis orientated toward literary based preaching. The present book is a revision of one first published in 1975.

study follows the same plan. A brief introduction is followed by a detailed discussion of every pericope and verse in question. A pastoral-theological application of some ten pages follows. Each concludes with a page select bibliography, and a general bibliography (in this case of 10 pages). Regrettably there are no indexes. Although there are very few notes, it cannot be said that the learning is carried lightly in the exegetical body of the text.

a common introduction characterizing Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2 as Jewish midrash (pp.1-7), the passages are treated separately. Both have a special introduction (8-21 and 53-62). Mt 1-2 revolves around the themes of identity (ch. 1) and destiny(ch.2) of the Messiah (22-52). Lk 1-2 is divided as annunciation narratives in 1:5-56, and birth narratives in 2:1-22 (63-116). There is nothing novel in this overview. Hendrickx does not speculate on the configuration of the communities to which these chapters would have powerfully spoken.

Regarding the pervasive Davidic imagery of Mt 1:1-2:12, the author correctly (if customarily!) pinpoints the primary typology as that of Israel, and the secondary one as Jesus-Moses. He thereby demotes the quotations from Isaiah and Micah/Samuel in 1:23 and 2:6, despite his own statement that the "stories appear, as it were, in the shadow of the quotations" (11). Hendrickx draws neither on Rudolf Pesch's convincing argument on the "Lord" acknowledging his "Son" in 1:22-23 and 2:15; nor on his explanation of Joseph refraining from marital intercourse in 1:25a due to obedience to Isaiah's command, "a virgin shall bear a son" in 1:23. Mary's hesitation to take Mary to wife is less plausibly attributed to her anxious desire not to be an obstacle to God's plans for her (31-32, 119). The "Nazarene" of 2:23 refers to Judges 13:5 on Samson the Nazirite saviour. He follows Raymond E. Brown in holding that Mt 2 follows Mt 1 in the structure of the "gospel in miniature": christological revelation - proclamation - acceptance of rejection.

Hendrickx's approach to Lk 1-2 is marked by the 1981 analysis by Lucien Jerphagnon of the apocalyptic nature of the annunciations to Mary and (less fully) to the shepherds. He considers all three annunciations to be purely literary. Some of his opinions are noted below.

Isaiah's dumbness was originally that of a privileged visionary, but was later misunderstood as a punishment by a hellenistic Christian editor (see pp. 68-69, 89). (Yet this dumbness fits so well into the story

line of the power of the word and its signs of vv.24, 35 and 67, that it can be wholly elucidated at the Lukan level). The angel's "Hail" is a sum to messianic joy, it would seem; but he does not relate this *chaire* to the immediately following *kecharitomene*. Mary's objection in 1:34 means the pregnancy cannot happen in her present situation as a betrothed. Lk 1:35 is entirely redactional. The hymns probably stem from the Christians of Jerusalem. Hendrickx follows R.E. Brown closely on 2:7 as heavily dependent on Jeremiah 14:8, Isaiah 1:3 and Wisdom 7:4-5, - "He will not be found in an 'inn' like an alien who stays there for lack of relations or friends, in a 'manger', symbolizing God as the support and sustenance of his people... he is 'wrapped in swaddling clothes', for no king had a different beginning of existence" (102). The sole clear reference to poverty in these chapters is the pair of turtle-doves (127, but see 107). The sword of 2:35 is Jesus' revealing word of salvation and judgement. Luke 2:40-52 is independent of the foregoing, and portrays the child Jesus in the Temple not as precocious, but as a keen learner with a sense of vocation.

Hendrickx writes within the Roman Catholic tradition, a fact which lends significance to his reaction to the influential Lukan exegesis of René Laurentin (1956-1982). He does not mention Laurentin's computation of 490 days (the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24) in 1:24-2:21. He doubts his explanation of the "after three days" of 2:46 as anticipating the loss and finding of the death and resurrection. However, he too presumes that Mary in 1:28-43 is presented as the (eschatological) Daughter Zion and Ark of the Covenant (110, 125); but he omits the requisite ascesis of exegetical argument. Despite Hendrickx's insistence on the christological focus of the annunciation/call scene of 1: 26-38, he devotes most of pp.124-125 to its Marian import.

It is refreshing that he can take the bold stand that the shepherd passage of 2:8-20 "may be considered the centre of the infancy narrative" (116; p.61). Furthermore, he says, 2:1-20 does not focus on the birth of Jesus but on its interpretation by the angels to the shepherds, and their reaction as the original Christian missionaries (92). This is unilateral. He misses the movement from the promise of 1:5-56 to the fulfilment of 1:57-2:40. These two chapters are bifocal, and Lk 1 must be seen to balance 2:1-20. Lucien Legrand put it well: "The annunciation to Zechariah represents the time of the Promise and the prophets; that to Mary provides a synthesis of the mystery of Christ; the Gospel to the shepherds already speaks of the Church and her mission."

These differences of opinion should not disguise the fact that Hendrickx has produced a painstaking, alert, and quite balanced exegesis. Perhaps it is too balanced in its wearying multiplicity of cautionary qualification "seems", "likely", "appears", "perhaps", and in its strident subjunctives. He provides a convenient short reformulation and slight development of R.E. Brown's monumental *The Birth of the Messiah* (1977). The infant of Mt 1-2 and Lk 1-2 is no God meek and mild whom we succour, but the One who ever present calling us to follow and proclaim him (see pp.117-118). No Christmas preacher or religious teacher has any excuse for easy sentiment when such sound and sober sense is here available to the diligent inquirer.

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Brian M. Nolan.

is expressly described as a pilot study, "an attempt to apply social-scientific paradigms to the examination of ancient religions, and specifically Gnosticism". It is also an experiment in cross-fertilisation between two disciplines. Up to now the study of Gnosticism has been largely the concern of biblical historians and historians of religion, with the occasional NT scholar investigating alleged "gnostic" influence in the NT. Reference has been made to the need for a sociological approach, but little has been done. Here a trained sociologist sets his hand to the task.

The immediate problem is where to find the data for a sociological investigation: we do not have the questionnaires, the statistical returns, the annual reports which serve the sociologist in the modern world. However, we have the massive volumes of Rostovtzeff's social and economic histories, the volumes of published volumes of the papyri, and a good deal more, particularly where Egypt is concerned. On the basis of these, Dr Green first examines the economy of Egypt, and the changes consequent upon the transition from Ptolemaic to Roman rule. Then he turns to the situation of the Jews in a considerable part of the population, particularly in Alexandria. Educated and ambitious found themselves under pressure; were they to assimilate, for the social and economic advantages it offered, at the cost of abandoning their heritage? Or were they to hold to their heritage, at the cost of remaining second-class citizens? Did they belong to the dominant Greek upper class, or with the humble Egyptian peasant? The Greek upper class was jealous of its privileges, and opposed to further integration of Jews; moreover it had the means of blocking such assimilation. Green argues that "a marginal upper-class, but powerless social group may have acted as a significant catalyst in the origins of Gnosticism by turning against its cultural heritage" (210), that "the emergence of Gnosticism can be interpreted partly as a response to the disruption of the Alexandrian upper class Jewish community in the wake of Roman social change"

Twenty years ago R.M. Grant advanced the theory, which he himself abandoned, that the origins of Gnosticism were to be sought in the disappointed eschatological hopes of Qumran sectaries. There have also been attempts to identify the fons et origo of the Gnostic movement. Moreover, the earliest Christian gnostics do not expressly name the God of the Demiurge who seeks to hold mankind in subjection; that appears to be a later development. And quite recently arguments have been advanced for a Hellenistic connection. It should therefore be noted that Dr Green does not present a sole and complete explanation: "It is not possible to say that Hellenism alone gave rise to Gnosticism, or that Gnosticism was solely the result of privatization in the Egyptian economy." (263) But in the studies by Pearson, Stroumsa, Segal and Grunewald, to name only a few, this thesis lends support to the view "that a Jewish sectarian milieu was necessary, although not sufficient, ingredient in gnostic origins". In sum, it offers an explanation for the curious case of Philo of Alexandria. His affinities have often been noted between Philo and the Gnostics, and it is generally agreed that Philo was not himself a Gnostic. His family was of the grade and he was not a prey to the frustrations with which Gnosticism is concerned. Others of similar background were. A word of warning is necessary for the uninitiated: references to the original thesis of 1978, which underwent "many revisions" and was published as a book in 1984. This of course makes it impossible to follow up quotations in the book.

This is a thorough and well-documented study, although there are a few flaws. It is not the last word on the subject but, as already noted, a pioneer study. What is important is that it shows what can be done, and that there is much to be learned from a greater cross-fertilisation between disciplines which have too often gone their several ways.

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R. McL. Wilson

F.F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians (The New International Commentary on the NT. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids and Paternoster, Exeter. 1984 pp.xxviii + 442 £18.95)

This is the second edition of this volume in this series. In the early edition Bruce wrote on Colossians and E.K. Simpson on Ephesians. Now Bruce has written on both and added for good measure a commentary on Philemon.

In the case of Colossians what he now offers is much more than a simple re-editing. He has taken into account the scholarly work that has appeared since the original volume and has added many apt comments thereon.

Today there is so much written on each biblical book that commentaries if they are not to become too extensive must limit their aims. The present commentary is strongest in exposition based on detailed and clear exegesis. There is however little application. It will therefore be of use both to the minister who is prepared to think through the application and to the student who wants to know what is really being said in these letters. Much of the detail of the exegesis lies in the footnotes so that the reader with little or no Greek can follow easily the main text. In line with the expository concentration critical questions about authorship and the like are not treated in detail (Bruce of course accepts the Pauline authorship of all three letters). Surprisingly in view of this we have four pages in the introduction to Philemon devoted to a consideration of where Paul was in prison when he wrote the letter. He finishes (p196) in effect by saying that it is impossible to reach a firm conclusion when Philemon is looked at by itself but "when Philemon is considered along with Colossians then Rome is the answer. However when we look at what he says in the introduction to Colossians we find he disposes of the problem in eleven lines and these begin "As for the date and place of writing dogmatism is to be avoided"! Although Bruce accepts Pauline authorship he is scrupulously fair throughout the commentary in pointing out places where there appear to be divergences from the normal Pauline practice in matters of word usage and thought.

One important variation from the first edition lies in his discussion of the Colossian heresy. He now locates this in Jewish Merkabah mysticism. One must ask whether there is any stronger evidence for this in the first century than there is for the gnosticism which Bruce rejects. In his comment on Col 1.20 he disputes the idea of universal reconciliation on the ground that it would conflict with what we find elsewhere in Paul, but on p29 he does allow for Paul adapting himself to new situations. I have to confess that at the end of his lengthy note on this very difficult verse (1.20) while I was quite clear what Bruce thought it did not mean I had no idea what I thought he did mean. I found the same in relation to Eph.1.9f.

But by and large his comments are lucid and helpful whether one accepts Pauline authorship or not for they are given over to the interpretation of the text and not to scoring points off those with whom he might disagree.

The commentary contains many apt illustrations, often from church history and comments. I liked that on p49, "theology is grace, and ethics is grat

was there any need to repeat it in a variant form on p138, N37? (There is also repetition in the commentary of what has been said in the introduction to the Colossian heresy - the commentary is already expensive enough without the need for repetition). Odd however is the division of the commentary into the publishers according to the chapters into which the letters are divided when these according to Bruce's outline do not represent the flow of Paul's thought. The footnotes and the bibliography put in touch with all the main writing on the epistles. Of the three commentaries I found that on Ephesians superior to the other two. It is more tightly written and argued. All three however are of a high standard and the author is to be commended on this second edition of Colossians and his first edition on Ephesians which replaces a most satisfactory commentary.

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G. Holmes, Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage,

Publications Committee of Irish Presbyterian Church, 1985 pb

Mr John Fortescue once wrote that "a rural parish is in itself a little world....a tiny centre of life, sensitive to the reaction of all surrounding things and reacting in turn, however unconsciously, upon it." Professor Holmes of Union Theological College, Belfast puts things not so differently in his judicious and ably written book. "Presbyterianism" he says, "is a way of being the Christian community in the world." He would look on this way of life as one expressed in the system of Church government, theology and worship adopted by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, whose history he tells with clarity, precision and fairness. He seeks to give an account of the origins and development of his Church in relation to the political, social, economic, intellectual and religious conditions of four centuries of Irish history which he summarizes well with accurate documentation. The author shows how a distinctively Presbyterian denomination has developed in the Irish environment. This should be of interest to many outside his own denomination, for it is a good example of the history that is now written by committed Irish historians who set out and support their interpretations without undue polemic once thought to be inseparable from dealing with Irish religious and historical topics. Professor Holmes wastes no time in trying to prove that Celtic Christianity was really Presbyterian. He stresses the Scottish origins of his church and continuing characteristics of its adherents and their virtues, but also their faults, especially a tendency to over-conservatism in religious matters, as well as "thrawnness" and obstinacy that have produced divisions. He is sympathetically with both sides in the accounts he gives of such matters. He would have welcomed, though, a fuller estimate of the influence, direct and indirect, which English puritanism and "Brownism" had in the early days. A fuller account of the Seceders is overdue, and we may hope Professor Holmes will yet write it. He is scrupulously fair in the contrast work to other communions in Ireland, though perhaps a little more could be said to explain the attitudes of 17th and 18th century Irish bishops and Scots-Irish Presbyterians. It was long before many of the Ulster Scots gave up the idea of creating in Ireland a community which would be a replica of the social, economic and religious parish system of Scotland

itself. For long, in some ways, Scottish Episcopalians were as 'disadvantaged' as Irish Presbyterians.

The author sees in the Presbyterian church in Ireland a tradition of value to the land as a whole, and to much (surprisingly much) of the world. He shows how such events as the rebellion of 1798, and the Home Rule 'campaigns', education and similar social issues, religious revivalism and the political changes and troubles of our own wild century have made the outlook of most Irish Presbyterians what it is. But he also shows how the Church has not forgotten what is modestly called 'outreach' at home and abroad. He faces the problems of strain and stress caused by internal theological differences, though most clergies and elders are content enough with the comfortable formula of subscription to the Westminster Confession. To maintain and service the multiplicity of organisations and agencies that seem necessary nowadays require the ever-increasing Church House bureaucracy that some find impersonal if not actually menacing. But, Professor Holmes concludes, the Church's problems are also a sign of its continuing life and witness. He may be right. Anyway, he has written an excellent book about how it has all come to be.

It is well-produced, illustrated and printed, with very few misprints and is good value for the money. Irish Presbyterians should gain much knowledge of their Church and stimulus for thought from it. Others should find it interesting and enlightening, based as it is on a careful study of up-to-date writing on Irish history and much painstaking and personal research.

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